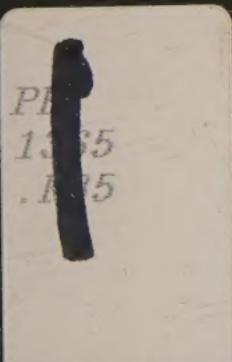


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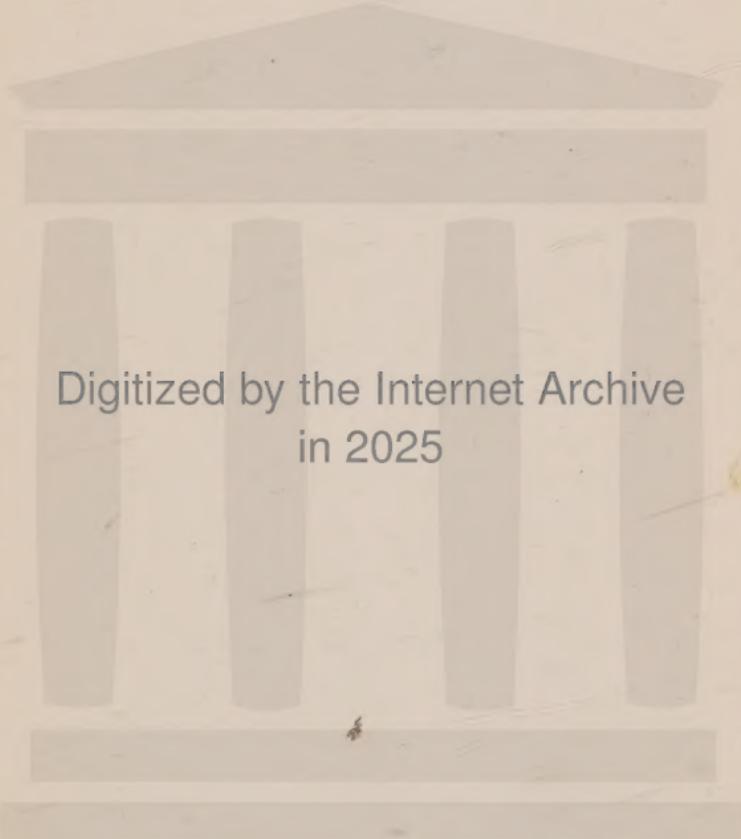
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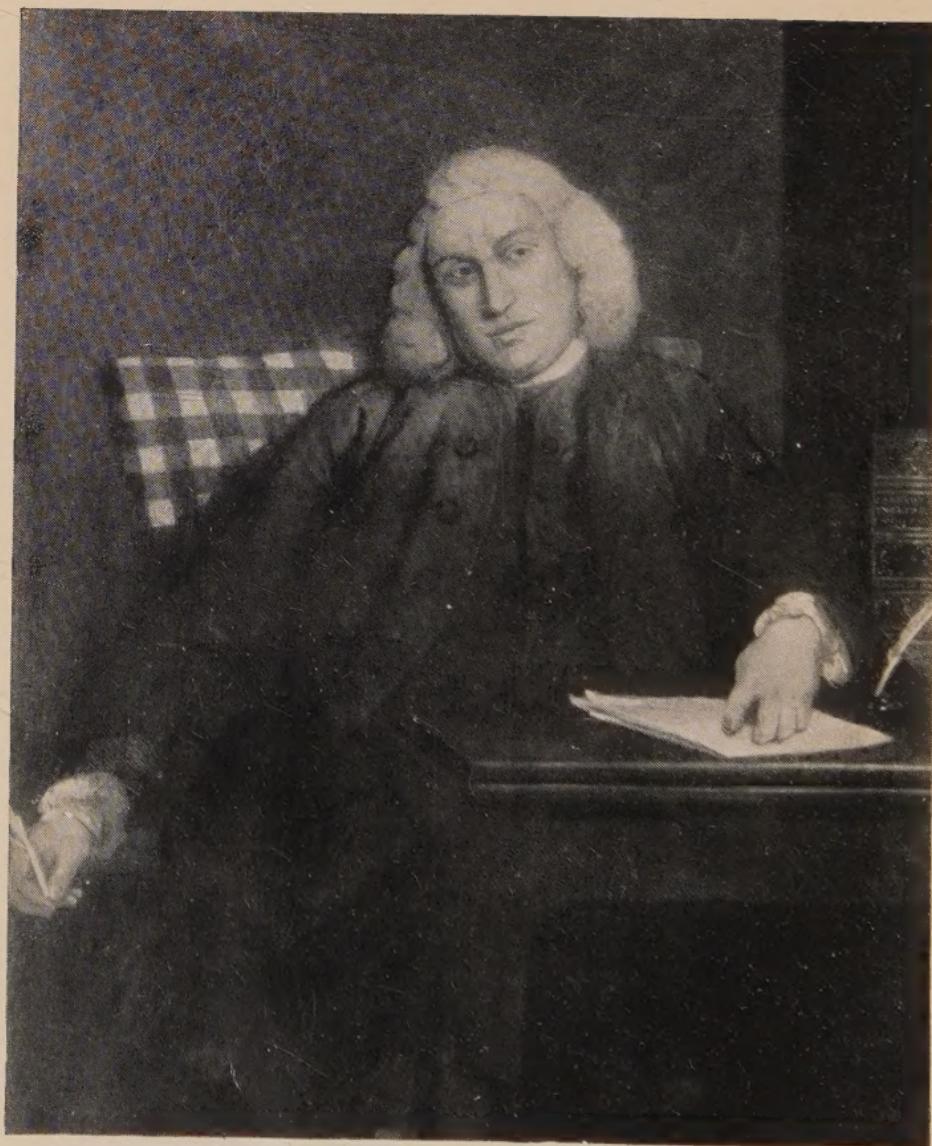
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Samuel Johnson, LL.D.
from the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds in the
possession of Charles Morrison, Esq.

Selections from Dr. Johnson's 'Rambler'

EDITED, WITH PREFACE AND NOTES

BY

W. HALE WHITE

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HUMPHREY MILFORD
PUBLISHER TO THE
UNIVERSITY

824
cop. 2

*First published 1907
Reprinted 1933*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

150184

PREFACE

THE *Beauties of Johnson* was published before Johnson's death, and the *Wit and Wisdom of Dr. Johnson* has been edited by Dr. Birkbeck Hill. The selection which follows has been taken from the *Rambler* alone, partly because the *Rambler* is sufficient for a volume of modest length and partly for a reason which will appear presently. There are disadvantages which are inseparable from a collection of striking passages. One is that a selected passage loses the weight of what goes before and comes after, and another is that the selector is apt to choose what suits his own mood, permanent or temporary. On the other hand many people who deserve consideration will not or cannot read big books, and a few, by a chance word which fits their own case, may be drawn to study the author. It would for some reasons have been better if the selections could have been classified, but each must then have been provided with a label which would limit it.

The object of this little book is not so much to give specimens of felicitous expression, such for example as 'The lady has settled her opinions, and maintains the dignity of her own performances with all the firmness of stupidity accustomed to be flattered': 'some (so-called friends) are disgusted

without offence and alienated without enmity': 'drowsy equilibrations of undetermined counsel': but rather to show what Johnson thought.

The first number of the *Rambler* was published on the 20th March, 1750¹, and the last number on the 14th March, 1752. On the 17th March, 1752, Johnson's wife died.² It came out on Tuesdays and Saturdays in the form of three folio half-sheets, unstamped, was sold for two pence, and printed for J. Payne and J. Bouquet in Paternoster Row 'where letters for the author are received'. Every number was entirely written by Johnson, excepting the five mentioned by Boswell and two letters in 15 and 107, which the last number assigns to contributors. Johnson was paid four guineas a week and the average sale did not exceed 500.³ Although it was

¹ New style so far as the year is concerned. The new style was not legally adopted till 1752, but before that date the months January, February, March (1-24) were considered sometimes as belonging to the year in which we now place them and sometimes to the year preceding. Thus the *Gentleman's Magazine* containing a notice of the first number of the *Rambler* is dated March, 1750, and the January and February numbers are also dated 1750, but in the March number there are two letters dated February, 1749.

² During 1750, 1751, and 1752 Johnson lived in Gough Square, a small open space entered from Fleet Street by Johnson's Court (not named after Dr. Johnson, although he once lived there), and looking as if it were scooped out from a mass of bricks and mortar. The house is now a type-foundry, but much the same externally as it was in Johnson's day. A memorial-tablet has been placed upon it.

³ What was the exact nature of the partnership in the *Rambler*



JOHNSON'S HOUSE IN GOUGH SQUARE

*From a drawing in the possession of E. Gardner, Esq. Taken probably
from a sketch made by the author in the year 1784.*

not popular the author received the praise which he valued most. ‘Johnson told me,’ says Boswell, ‘with an amiable fondness a little pleasing circumstance relative to this work. Mrs. Johnson, in whose between Cave, Payne, Bouquet, and Johnson it is not easy to discover. The imprint on the first sixty-six numbers is that given above, on the sixty-seventh number there is prefixed to this imprint ‘London, St. John’s Gate’ (Cave’s shop), but this again is dropped later on. According to Dr. Birch (*Boswell*, i, 203, Birkbeck Hill’s edition) Cave was the ‘proprietor’ of the *Rambler*, but the statement is rather loose and Birch may not have meant sole proprietor. Chalmers in his *Biographical Dictionary* (xix, 58) says ‘He (Johnson) was fortunate in forming a connexion with Mr. John Payne, a bookseller in Paternoster Row, and afterwards chief accountant in the Bank of England, a man with whom he lived many years in habits of friendship, and who, on the present occasion, treated him with great liberality. He engaged to pay him two guineas for each paper, or four guineas *per week*, which at that time must have been to Johnson a very considerable sum; and he admitted him to a share in the future profits of the work, when it should be collected into volumes: this share Johnson afterwards sold.’ In Nichols’s *Literary Anecdotes* (viii, 415) there is printed an agreement between Johnson and Cave which recites that as ‘Edward Cave, citizen and stationer of London, has bought paper and printed for me an edition in folio, of a periodical work called *The Rambler*, and is now about to reprint seventy numbers of the same work in twelves at his own expense: Now know ye, that I, the said Samuel Johnson, do hereby authorize and empower the said Edward Cave to sell and dispose of the said second edition of *The Rambler* in twelves and to receive and apply to his own use so much of the money arising from such sale as shall fully repay and reimburse to him such sums as upon a just reckoning he shall appear to have expended on account of the said work; provided that the names of John Payne and Joseph Bouquet be inserted in the new edition in twelves, as the persons for whom the said edition is printed, as is inserted in the said folio edition.’

judgment and taste he had great confidence, said to him, after a few numbers of the *Rambler* had come out, “I thought very well of you before; but I did not imagine you could have written anything equal to this.” It might be supposed that if writing was ever the result of labour it was so in the *Rambler*, but the papers were seldom begun till the last moment, and were never read by Johnson till they were printed. His indolence, his constant depression of spirits, and the *Dictionary* which was going on at the same time prevented preparation. Sir Joshua Reynolds once asked him by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. He told him, that he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion, and in every company; to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could put it; and that by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expressions to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him.

But although this is true, the *Rambler* was carefully and extensively revised by Johnson in the editions of his *Works*, and his revisions are almost always improvements. They are mostly excisions of superfluities, or substitutions of more precise words and phrases. For example here is a specimen from the first number. He is talking of the advantages of short periodical essays:

FIRST EDITION.

‘He that is afraid of laying out too much time upon an experiment of which he fears the event, persuades himself that a few days will shew him what he is to expect from his learning and genius. If he thinks his own judgment not sufficiently enlightened, he may, by attending the remarks which every paper will produce, inform himself of his mistakes, rectify his opinions, and extend his views.’

REVISED EDITION.

‘He that would fear to lay out too much time upon an experiment of which he knows not the event, persuades himself that a few days will show him what he is to expect from his learning and his genius. If he thinks his own judgment not sufficiently enlightened, he may, by attending the remarks which every paper will produce, rectify his opinions.’

The extracts in this selection are from the revised edition.

There have been changes in the meaning of words used in the *Rambler*, and some of the changes are recent. Johnson says that Milton makes a very *just* distinction between temptation and compulsion, using the word as Swift uses it when he talks of a *just* map. So also with ‘moral’. Wordsworth speaks of ‘the *moral* intimations of the sky’. ‘Elegant,’ ‘judicious,’ ‘candour,’ ‘describe’ in the *Rambler* are not what they are now, as a reference to the *Oxford Dictionary* will show. To Goldsmith ‘nothing is truly elegant, but what unites use with beauty’. ‘Judicious’ is to Johnson what it is to Hamlet,

‘... though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious [wise, sensible] grieve.’ In the 93rd *Rambler* we are told that ‘criticism has so often given occasion to the envious and ill-natured of gratifying their malignity, that some have thought it necessary to recommend the virtue of *candour* without restriction, and to preclude all future liberty of censure’. ‘Candour’ here is sweetness of temper, generosity, as in Dryden’s ‘your candour in pardoning my errors’. Once more, in the 102nd *Rambler* the shore cannot be *described* in the darkness by the passengers and we at once put down *described* as a misprint for *descried*, but Gibbon *describes* a blemish, not by description but by discovery of it. This caution is necessary, because many expressions, such as ‘elegant’ and ‘judicious’, in the *Rambler* seem awkward and stiff, and the meaning of others is already obsolete. Johnson’s style has been frequently condemned, and sometimes with derision. Sir Leslie Stephen, who on the whole is sympathetic, is of opinion that the *Rambler* ‘marks the culminating period of Johnson’s worst qualities of style’. Macaulay in his review of Croker’s *Boswell* is still more severe. The style of Johnson’s essays is ‘systematically vicious’. His ‘constant practice of padding out a sentence with useless epithets, till it became as stiff as the bust of an exquisite, his antithetical forms of expression, constantly employed even where there is no opposition in the ideas expressed, his big words wasted on little things, his

harsh inversions . . . have been imitated by his admirers and parodied by his assailants, till the public has become sick of the subject'.¹ It might be retorted that there is an antithesis worse than that of forms of expression, an antithesis by which character is split up for the sake of effect. Much worse than verbal antithesis is the 'union of great powers with low prejudices'; 'gigantic elevation and dwarfish littleness,' 'disdainful manner in which he rejects unauthenticated anecdotes, even when they are consistent with the general laws of nature, and the respectful manner in which he mentions the wildest stories relating to the invisible world'.² Macaulay did not understand—it was not

¹ This essay is not to be confounded with the much better *Life* written later for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and reprinted by Mr. Matthew Arnold as an introduction to the *Six Chief Lives from Johnson's Lives of the Poets*.

² As to the 'invisible world', Macaulay no doubt refers to Johnson's disinclination to disbelieve all reports of the reappearance of the dead. The cause of this disinclination, as Boswell reports, was his desire to accumulate 'evidence of the spiritual world'. In a most affecting prayer about a month after his wife died he besought God that if the souls of the dead might minister to the living his wife might 'have care' of him. 'Forgive my presumption, enlighten my ignorance,' he cries. He declared to Mrs. Knowles that the question of messages from beyond the grave was, after 5,000 years, still undecided and 'one of the most important that can come before the human understanding'. Yet he condemned Wesley for accepting a ghost story after too little inquiry and he assisted in the detection of the Cock Lane Ghost. It was he who wrote in the *Gentleman's Magazine* an account of the imposture. Macaulay must have read Johnson's prayer in the *Prayers and Meditations*. It is characteristic that he should see nothing in it

in him to understand—that the bundles of sheer contradictions which he labelled ‘Bacon’ and ‘Johnson’ could not exist, and that, by substituting them for biography, not only were the real Bacon and Johnson lost to the world, but false and ridiculous phantasms were put in their place. Happily the true flesh-and-blood Bacon has been restored to us by Mr. Spedding, but Macaulay’s absurdity with ‘the liberal and enlarged mind’, who nevertheless believed he committed sin in drinking coffee on Good Friday, still abides. Johnson had a liberal and enlarged mind: he was also afraid of drinking coffee on Good Friday, but if we merely put these two facts together, and leave them together just as they are without explanation, the result, as we have just said, is the affirmation of impossible existence.

However, this is a digression. We are not now concerned to discuss Macaulay’s method of writing a *life* or whether anything living can be produced by it. The question now is the style of the *Rambler*. It is, doubtless, unusual and ponderous. It should not be imitated externally, and may easily be parodied. But it seldom admits real surplusage, and what is called the Johnsonian balance is not mere see-saw. For instance, let us take the following passages:—but superstition and weakness, and that he does not discern that, although a belief in the intercession of the dead and in help by them may be folly, it may also be an indication of greatness.

‘Being accustomed to give the future full power over my mind, and to start away from the scene before me to some expected enjoyment, I deliver myself up to the tyranny of every desire which fancy suggests, and long for a thousand things which I am unable to procure. Money has much less power than is ascribed to it by those that want it. I had formed schemes which I cannot execute, I had supposed events which do not come to pass, and the rest of my life must pass in craving solicitude,¹ unless you can find some remedy for a mind, corrupted with an inveterate disease of wishing, and unable to think upon anything but wants, which reason tells me will never be supplied.’ Again: ‘He who has so little knowledge of human nature, as to seek happiness by changing anything but his own dispositions, will waste his life in fruitless efforts and multiply the griefs which he purposes to remove.’ Each member of Johnson’s balanced sentences conveys a new idea or is a double stroke on the head of the nail. It is also arguable that writing is one thing and talking another,² and that there are some subjects which demand a certain pomp. This is very different from ‘brilliance’. Johnson is never ‘brilliant’.

¹ ‘Some craving passion’; i. e. some passion which craves. *Rambler*, No. 155.

² ‘When . . . we read in the Bible of 1611 “and they did eat, and were all filled” it is not easy to see any reason, except the very good one that it improves the rhythm of the sentence, why the verb should be “did eat” and not “ate”.’ Bradley’s *Making of English*, p. 70.

It is true that the style of the *Rambler*, *Idler*, and *Rasselas* is not that of the *Lives of the Poets*, published in 1779-81. Macaulay thinks that the reason for the difference is that during his later years Johnson had talked more and written less, but neither is the style of the *Rambler* like that of the *Life of Savage*, published in 1744. Mrs. Piozzi says that the *Rambler* 'breathes indeed the genuine emanations of the great author's mind, expressed too in a style so natural to him, and so much like his common mode of conversing, that I was myself but little astonished when he told me that he had scarcely read over one of those inimitable essays before they went to the press'.¹ Miss Burney records in her *Diary*,² 'When I took up Cowley's Life, he made me put it away to talk. I could not help remarking how very like Dr. Johnson is to his writing; and how much the same thing it was to hear or to read him; but that nobody could tell that without coming to Streatham, for his language was generally imagined to be laboured and studied, instead of the mere common flow of his thoughts.' Miss Burney is speaking of the *Lives of the Poets*, but there is evidence to prove that Johnson never constructed a style, and that he wrote in a way which was at the time natural to him. There is another sense, and one of more importance, in which Mrs. Piozzi and Miss Burney are right. Johnson, like Carlyle, always insisted in any company on talking upon

¹ *Anecdotes*, p. 235, ed. 1826.

² Vol. i, p. 99, ed. 1842.

those subjects which interested him. He at once began to speak, when the present editor was introduced to him, of a portrait of Luther which hung over his mantelpiece and of Frederick the Great, and the sentences might have been taken out of *Past and Present*. So Johnson kept back nothing of himself. He never 'let himself down', and whatever he was thinking was presented to Mrs. Thrale or Miss Burney just as it presented itself to him.

Boswell's *Life* has obscured the merits of Johnson's works. Carlyle says: 'In worth we have rated it (the *Life*) beyond any other product of the eighteenth century: all Johnson's own writings, laborious and in their kind genuine above most, stand on a quite inferior level to it; already, indeed, they are becoming obsolete for this generation; and for some future generation may be valuable chiefly as prolegomena, expository scholia to this *Johnsoniad* of Boswell.'¹ Surely it is incredible that a man's talk should be immortal and that what he writes should be nearly worthless! Boswell thinks that Johnson in conversation sometimes misrepresented himself, but strove to be perfectly sincere when he took up his pen.² 'He could, when he chose it, be the greatest sophist that

¹ As literature, the *Life of Pope*, to say nothing of the other *Lives*, is so admirable that one is apt to suspect Carlyle never read it.

² Hazlitt said to Northcote: 'It is always easiest to defend a paradox or an opinion you don't care seriously about.'

ever wielded a weapon in the schools of declamation ; but he indulged this only in conversation ; for he owned he sometimes talked for victory ; he was too conscientious to make error permanent and pernicious by deliberately writing it.' He was once told of a man who was thankful for being introduced to him, 'as he had been convinced in a long dispute that an opinion which he had embraced as a settled truth was no better than a vulgar error. "Nay," said he, "do not let him be thankful, for he was right, and I was wrong.'" Mr. Birkbeck Hill quotes a passage from the *Adventurer*, written by Johnson, which no doubt refers to himself. 'But while the various opportunities of conversation invite us to try every mode of argument, and every art of recommending our sentiments, we are frequently betrayed to the use of such as are not in themselves

I would sooner (as a matter of choice) take the wrong side than the right in any argument. If you have a thorough conviction on any point and good grounds for it, you have studied it long, and the real reasons have sunk into the mind ; so that what you can recall of them at a sudden *pinch* seems unsatisfactory and disproportionate to the confidence of your belief and to the magisterial tone you are disposed to assume . . . I would much rather (as the safest side) insist on Milton's pedantry than on his sublimity, supposing I were not in the company of very good judges. A single stiff or obscure line would outweigh a whole book of solemn grandeur in the mere flippant encounter of the wits ; and, in general, the truth and justice of the cause you espouse is rather an incumbrance than an assistance ; or it is like heavy armour which few have strength to wield.' *Conversations of James Northcote, Esq., R.A.*, by William Hazlitt, pp. 235, 236, ed. 1830.

strictly defensible: a man heated in talk, and eager of victory, takes advantage of the mistakes or ignorance of his adversary, lays hold of concessions to which he knows he has no right, and urges proofs likely to prevail on his opponent, though he knows himself that they have no force: thus the severity of reason is relaxed, many topics are accumulated, but without just arrangement or distinction; we learn to satisfy ourselves with such ratiocination as silences others; and seldom recall to a close examination that discourse which has gratified our vanity with victory and applause.'

There is much also in Johnson which is not revealed in his conversation. Some men, and Johnson is one of them, can disclose in a letter or book hopes, fears, and convictions which they would not impart to their most intimate friends by the fireside, and so far is it from being true that 'what he puts on paper' is 'nearly worthless compared with his talk', that it may be affirmed Johnson is but partially understood by those who know him through Boswell alone.

The *Rambler* takes but little notice of public topics. It has nothing to say about the earthquakes which in March and April, 1750, frightened London out of its senses, when people of fashion left it and sat in their coaches on the open roads and hardly any lodgings were to be found in all the country round as far as Windsor. The Bishop of London charged his clergy on earthquakes.

They were a judgement on the infidel literature of the age, on the blasphemy in the streets, 'on the lewdness and debauchery that prevailed amongst the lowest people, which keeps them idle, poor and miserable' (not a judgement on his Sacred Majesty and the Countess of Yarmouth), and lastly on the great increase of Popery. The first number of the *Rambler*, published when the Bishop was still sounding the episcopal trumpet, was an apology for issuing the *Rambler* in parts; the second was a meditation on the common weakness of anticipating the future; and the third was an essay on criticism.

Johnson was a moralist¹, not in the narrow sense in which we now use the word, but signifying the student and critic of all that is good and evil, pleasant and unpleasant in human nature. 'The great praise of Socrates,' he says, is that 'he drew the wits of Greece' to turn their thoughts 'upon the various modes of virtue and relations of life'. 'Raphael in return to Adam's enquiries into the courses of the stars, and the revolutions of heaven, counsels him to withdraw his mind from idle speculations, and employ his faculties on nearer and more interesting objects, the survey of his own life,' &c.

This is a study which is now out of fashion. The preacher who should preach upon the various modes of virtue and relations of life would have

¹ See Appendix.

but a small following, and the author who discussed them would not find it easy to obtain a publisher. Undoubtedly Johnson presents us only with a half-truth when he teaches self-knowledge and contemns curious physical and metaphysical research. We may go even further and say that it is a defect in the *Rambler* that it does not take sufficient account of the indirect modes by which satisfaction with life is secured. Man is born to know everything which can be known, to love all that is lovely, and science or art may have a very practical effect on his character and his happiness. Nevertheless, Johnson's doctrine is a half-truth as sufficient as it is possible for any doctrine taught by a finite creature to be. It is wholesome to turn, at least occasionally, from the speculation of the twentieth century to the *Rambler* and *Idler*. There we are on mother earth and learn how to do what is to be done to-day. It does harm to busy ourselves with that which is beyond our strength, we become giddy and may fall. 'The punishment,' says Bacon, expounding the fable of Pentheus, 'assigned to those who with rash audacity, forgetting their mortal condition, aspire by the heights of nature and philosophy, as by climbing a tree, to penetrate the divine mysteries, is perpetual inconstancy, and a judgment vacillating and perplexed.'

Johnson does not examine the foundations of morals, nor has he any consistent method of dealing with human affairs. The *Rambler* is none the worse

because it is a series of miscellaneous tracts. It is worthy of notice that men who have had no distinct errand or purpose, no new philosophy or religion to propose, should have left such deeply scored marks. The universe is so complex that nothing is true save a word fitted to a particular occasion. The systems decay ; the cause for which the reformer preached is discovered to have for the most part no relationship with fact, and becomes a dead cause, but some casual speech in a field of lilies, a parable, essay, or fable survives and will survive as long as the race lasts. Johnson walks up and down Fleet Street, strolls in the garden at Streatham, says this and that is good or bad, and does nothing big except the *Dictionary*, which was done for bread.

Although Johnson is a moralist he is not censorious. He is human ; his experience of life is wide and deep ; he is an apologist for natural propensity. For example, it is one of our stock commonplaces that men neglect the present and place their happiness in the future. The fact that the tendency is universal is for Johnson sufficient to prevent the customary satire. ‘This practice is a commodious subject of raillery to the gay, and of declamation to the serious ; it has been ridiculed with all the pleasantry of wit, and exaggerated with all the amplifications of rhetorick. Every instance by which its absurdity might appear most flagrant has been studiously collected ; it has been marked with every epithet of contempt, and all the tropes and figures have been called forth against it.

‘Censure is willingly indulged because it always implies some superiority ; men please themselves with imagining that they have made a deeper search or wider survey than others and detected faults and follies which escape vulgar observation. And the pleasure of wantoning in common topicks is so tempting to a writer that he cannot easily resign it ; a train of sentiments generally received enables him to shine without labour and to conquer without a contest. It is so easy to laugh at the folly of him who lives only in idea, refuses immediate ease for distant pleasures, and, instead of enjoying the blessings of life, lets life glide away in preparations to enjoy them ; it affords such opportunities of triumphant exultation, to exemplify the uncertainty of the human state, to rouse mortals from their dream, and inform them of the silent celerity of time, that we may believe authors willing rather to transmit than examine so advantageous a principle, and more inclined to pursue a track so smooth and so flowery, than attentively to consider whether it leads to truth. This quality of looking forward into futurity seems the unavoidable condition of a being whose motions are gradual and whose life is progressive : as his powers are limited he must use means for the attainment of his ends and intend first what he performs last : as by continual advances from his first stage of existence he is perpetually varying the horizon of his prospects, he must always discover new motives of action, new excitements of fear and allurements of desire. . . . The natural flights

of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure, but from hope to hope. . . . There would . . . be few enterprises of great labour or hazard undertaken if we had not the power of magnifying the advantages which we persuade ourselves to expect from them.'

Johnson's morality is also hatred of the oppressor, and pity for the unfortunate. *Zosima* is the daughter of a gentleman who has lost his money and she comes to London to get a place as maid. She applies first to Mrs. Bombasine, the great silk-mercer's lady, two yards round the waist, and with a face like a full moon. Mrs. B. on learning that *Zosima* was a gentlewoman and that her father had been unfortunate cannot miss the opportunity. 'A great misfortune indeed to come to me and have three meals a day. So your father was a gentleman, and you are a gentlewoman I suppose—such gentlewomen! Such gentlewomen! People should set their children to good trades and keep them off the parish. Pray go to the other end of the town, there are gentlewomen, if they would pay their debts: I am sure we have lost enough by gentlewomen. Pray Mrs. gentlewoman, troop downstairs.' Mrs. Standish, whose husband from being a clerk in an office had been promoted to be a Commissioner of Excise, after keeping *Zosima* waiting six hours, comes out with two of her company, and with them also comes a smell of punch. The Commissioner's wife, amidst laughter, suggests that a bastard has brought *Zosima* to town. Mr. Courtly and his lady, to whom *Zosima* is next intro-

duced, are playing at piquet when she calls. ‘Come child, says Mr. Courtly, hold up your head; what? you have stole nothing. Not yet, says the lady, but she hopes to steal your heart quickly. Here was a laugh of happiness and triumph, prolonged by the confusion which I could no longer repress. At last the lady recollected herself: Stole? no—but if I had her, I should watch her; for that down-cast eye—why cannot you look people in the face? Steal! says her husband, she would steal nothing but perhaps a few ribands before they were left off by her lady. Sir, answered I, why should you, by supposing me a thief, insult one from whom you have received no injury? Insult, says the lady; are you come here to be a servant, you saucy baggage, and talk of insulting? What will this world come to if a gentleman may not jest with a servant? Well such servants! Pray be gone, and see when you will have the honour to be insulted again. Servants insulted—a fine time—Insulted! Get you downstairs you slut, or the footman shall insult you.’ It is difficult to imagine what would have happened if Dr. Johnson had been present at the interviews with Mrs. Bombasine, Mrs. Standish, or Mr. and Mrs. Courtly. The occupation of Mr. Standish should not be overlooked. In the *Dictionary* excise is defined as ‘a hateful tax levied on commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid’, and in the *Idler* (No. 65) ‘the two lowest of all human

beings' are declared to be 'a scribbler for a party and a commissioner of excise'.

Johnson has no mercy on Mrs. Bombasine and Mrs. Standish, but there is mercy and not judgement for the prostitute. The 170th and 171st numbers of the *Rambler* are founded on a story which a girl told to Johnson and Barette under a tree in the King's Bench Walk. Misella was of good family, but her father was poor. A wealthy relative, married and with children, took her to his own house, adopted her, ruined her, found an excuse for sending her away, and finally deserted her. 'I know not,' says Misella, 'why it should afford subject of exultation to overpower on any terms the resolution, or surprize the caution of a girl; but of all the boasters who deck themselves in the spoils of innocence and beauty, they surely have the least pretensions to triumph, who submit to owe their success to some casual influence. They neither employ the graces of fancy, nor the force of understanding in their attempts; they cannot please their vanity with the art of their approaches, the delicacy of their adulations, the elegance of their address, or the efficacy of their eloquence; nor applaud themselves as possessed of any qualities, by which affection is attracted. They surmount no obstacles, they defeat no rivals, but attack only those who cannot resist, and are often content to possess the body, without any solicitude to gain the heart.'

'Many of these despicable wretches does my present acquaintance with infamy and wickedness

enable me to number among the heroes of debauchery. Reptiles whom their own servants would have despised, had they not been their servants, and with whom beggary would have disdained intercourse, had she not been allured by hopes of relief. Many of the beings which are now rioting in taverns or shivering in the streets have been corrupted not by arts of gallantry which stole gradually upon the affections and laid prudence asleep, but by the fear of losing benefits which were never intended, or of incurring resentment which they could not escape ; some have been frightened by masters, and some awed by guardians into ruin.'

Letters from Misella to her seducer were not answered, and an agent who called at his house was informed that he had gone with wife and family to live upon his estate in Ireland. Misella sold her clothes, tried to get into service, but was unsuccessful because she could not produce a character, obtained work from a draper, but one of her fellow lodgers stole the lace ; she was threatened with prosecution, and had to fly. At last she descended to common prostitution, and thus she, or rather Johnson, reflects, 'If those who pass their days in plenty and security could visit for an hour the dismal receptacles to which the prostitute retires from her nocturnal excursions and see the wretches lie crowded together, mad with intemperance, ghastly with famine, nauseous with filth, and noisome with disease ; it would not be easy for any degree of abhorrence to harden them against com-

passion, or to repress the desire which they must immediately feel to rescue such numbers of human beings from a state so dreadful.'

No sentence is pronounced on Misella. Hardly is there a verdict of guilty. Johnson is not a priest but a man, a man like his Master, a man to whom mercy as well as judgement are 'the weightier matters of the Law'. There is an infinite depth of tenderness in him. It is impossible to avoid quoting two passages from the *Prayers and Meditations* published after his death. Kitty Chambers was his mother's old servant, his 'dear Kitty' as he calls her, and she had been allowed to live in the house at Lichfield after her mistress's death in 1759. In 1767 Johnson was in Lichfield and here are the entries for 17th August and 18th October, 1767¹ :—

‘17 August 1767.

‘I am now about to receive with my old friend Kitty Chambers the sacrament preparatory to her death². Grant, O God, that it may fit me. I purpose temperance for my resolution. O God, enable me to keep my purpose to thy glory.

‘5.32 p.m. I have communicated with Kitty and kissed her. I was for some time distracted but at last more composed. I commended my friends and Kitty. Lucy [his stepdaughter, Miss Porter] and I were much affected. Kitty is, I think, going to heaven.

¹ Collated with the MS. in Pembroke College, Oxford.

² She did not die till some time afterwards.

‘O God, grant that I may practise such temperance in meat, drink, and sleep, and all bodily enjoyments, as may fit me for the duties to which Thou shalt call me, and by thy blessing procure me freedom of thought, and quietness of mind, that I may so serve Thee in this short and frail life, that I may be received by Thee at my death to everlasting happiness. Take not O Lord thy Holy Spirit from me, deliver me not up to vain fears, but have mercy on me, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

‘O God who desirest not the death—

‘O Lord grant us encrease—

‘O God—pardon and peace.

‘O God who knowest our necessities.

‘Our Father.

‘Oct. 18, 1767, Sunday.

‘Yesterday, Oct. 17 at about ten in the morning I took my leave for ever of my dear old friend Catherine Chambers, who came to live with my mother about 1724, and has been but little parted from us since. She buried my father, my brother, and my mother. She is now fifty-eight years old.

‘I desired all to withdraw, then told her that we were to part for ever, that as Christians we should part with prayer, and that I would, if she was willing, say a short prayer beside her. She expressed great desire to hear me, and held up her poor hands, as she lay in bed, with great fervour, while I prayed, kneeling by her, nearly in the following words:

‘Almighty and most merciful Father, whose

loving-kindness is over all thy works, behold, visit, and relieve this thy servant who is grieved with sickness. Grant that the sense of her weakness may add strength to her faith, and seriousness to her repentance. And grant that by the help of thy Holy Spirit after the pains and labours of this short life, we may all obtain everlasting happiness through Jesus Christ our Lord, for whose sake hear our prayers. Amen.

‘Our Father.

‘I then kissed her. She told me that to part was the greatest pain that she had ever felt, and that she hoped we should meet again in a better place. I expressed with swelled eyes and great emotion of tenderness the same hopes. We kissed and parted. I humbly hope, to meet again, and to part no more.’

This is partly a digression which it is hoped the reader will excuse. There is not much in the religious documents of the world or in literature which goes deeper, and the man who can read it without some quivering and perhaps some tears must have a hard heart.

There are two or three reasons why the *Rambler* is not much read now. It is two centuries later than the Elizabethan writers and the excitement caused by the revival of learning, and in quality it is still more remote from Byron, Shelley, and Keats, and the notion that life is a luxury of thinking and feeling rather than a succession of duties. Johnson also was a Christian, not as we

now interpret the word, including under it all kinds of heretics provided only that they are in sympathy with the spirit of the gospels, but in the sense that he firmly believed all the doctrines of the Church. We do not now understand how anybody with his intelligence could assume their truth so unhesitatingly without any attempt to rationalize them. Johnson takes them as they stand: God has ordained them and there is an end to it. So it was with the wisest of mankind, the author of the *Great Instauration*. 'Wherefore we conclude,' says Bacon in the *Advancement of Learning*, 'that sacred Theology (which in our idiom we call Divinity) is grounded only upon the word and oracle of God, and not upon the light of nature: for it is written *Cæli enarrant gloriam Dei*, but it is not written, *Cæli enarrant voluntatem Dei*, but of that it is said, *Ad legem et testimonium: si non fecerint secundum verbum istum &c.* This holdeth not only in those points of faith which concern the great mysteries of the Deity, of the Creation, of the Redemption, but likewise those which concern the law moral truly interpreted.' This attitude both of Bacon and Johnson is amazing to us, for everybody now, unlearned as well as learned, is supposed to be entitled to the doubts and denials of all the sceptics, German, French, and English. The superstition of credulity has given place to a superstition of incredulity, or rather of credulity in a different form. It is by no means asserted that the scholars are wrong, but the acceptance of their conclusions, so

far as most of us are concerned, is essentially in no way more respectable than the faith of a cowherd in 1750. The fashion for poems, essays, and stories which exult in the Contradiction or Antinomy of the Universe is now more than ever prevalent,¹ and we are all of us heaven-storming, blaspheming Titans. We have forgotten that there is no gospel but that of the Reconciliation and that the man who brings us into agreement with the smallest fact which was hostile does greater service than a sublime genius depicting through volumes rebellion or despair. Every brave man strives in some fashion or other to come to terms with himself and the world. The *Vanity of Human Wishes* is a terrible poem, 'so true' as Byron says,² but these are the closing lines:

'Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
Obedient passions, and a will resign'd ;
For love, which scarce collective man can fill ;
For patience, sov'reign o'er transmuted ill ;
For faith, that, panting for a happier seat,
Courts death, kind Nature's signal of retreat :
These goods for man the Laws of Heav'n ordain,

¹ Johnson noticed it in his own day. 'To tell of disappointment and misery, to thicken the darkness of futurity, and perplex the labyrinth of uncertainty, has been always a delicious employment of the poets.' *Lives of the English Poets, Pope.*

² 'Read Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*—all the examples and mode of giving them sublime, as well as the latter part, with the exception of an occasional couplet. . . . 'Tis a grand poem—and *so true.*' *Letters and Journals*, vol. v, pp. 161, 162, ed. 1901.

These goods He grants, who grants the power to gain ;
With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find.'

The *Rambler* is neglected because its philosophy is nothing more than everybody knows. Victoria, in No. 133, is a fashionable beauty who falls sick of the small-pox, is scarred, and is therefore forgotten. Her mother, who expected a great conquest with her, never enters her room 'without the whine of condolence, or the growl of anger', and finally abandons her 'to the fate of a fallen toast, whose fortune she considered as a hopeless game, no longer worthy of solicitude or attention'. Victoria is miserable and unburdens herself to her friend Euphemia, who thus consoles her. 'Of your calamity, a small part is the infliction of Heaven, the rest is little more than the corrosion of idle discontent. You have lost that which may indeed sometimes contribute to happiness, but to which happiness is by no means inseparably annexed. You have lost what the greater number of the human race never have possessed ; what those on whom it is bestowed for the most part possess in vain ; and what you, while it was yours, knew not how to use : you have only lost early what the laws of nature forbid you to keep long, and have lost it while your mind is yet flexible, and while you have time to substitute more valuable and more durable excellencies. Consider yourself, my Victoria, as a being born to know, to reason, and to act ; rise at once from your dream of melancholy to wisdom

and to piety; you will find that there are other charms than those of beauty, and other joys than the praise of fools.'

These may be called platitudes, but is there any consolation in sickness which is not a platitude? When we endure pain and depression week after week, doubting the issue of each weary day, has any support been revealed to us unknown to all the sons of men? Johnson has found nothing better, but what he has found he feels. He is wise enough not to discard that which is common because it is common: he has discovered that it is our duty to put life and meaning into the common; that the only salvation attainable lies therein. His correspondent is Victoria, and we may presume therefore that she conquers and becomes satisfied with 'other joys than the praise of fools'.

The *Rambler* may be dead and yet may survive. According to St. Paul, *that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die*. There is a book-mark in one of the numbers of the present editor's collection of the *Ramblers* as they appeared in 1750-52. It is half a nurseryman's bill from the New Road, Marylebone, for plants supplied in 1806 to somebody whose name has been torn away. The plants have been dead close upon a hundred years: the customer very likely followed them not long afterwards; but so surely as the plants now live does the *Rambler* live also.

Johnson, when he began the *Rambler*, prayed for God's blessing on it:—

‘Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and *without whose grace all wisdom is folly*, grant, I beseech Thee, that in this my undertaking thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation both of myself and others ; grant this, O Lord, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.’

This prayer is taken from his journal, and when he wrote it he did not think it would ever be published. The underscoring by the present editor, considering the words come from Johnson, may, it is hoped, be pardoned.

The editor begs to acknowledge with gratitude the permission given by Mr. E. Gardner to copy the drawings in his possession of Johnson’s house and study, and by Mr. C. Morrison to copy the portrait of Johnson taken by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1756, four years after the *Rambler* had come to an end. This photographic copy of the original portrait differs from the engraving in Mr. Birkbeck Hill’s *Boswell*, vol. i, p. 392. In the engraving the defect in the right eye has been softened, and the expression of the mouth altered. Johnson was blind in the right eye.

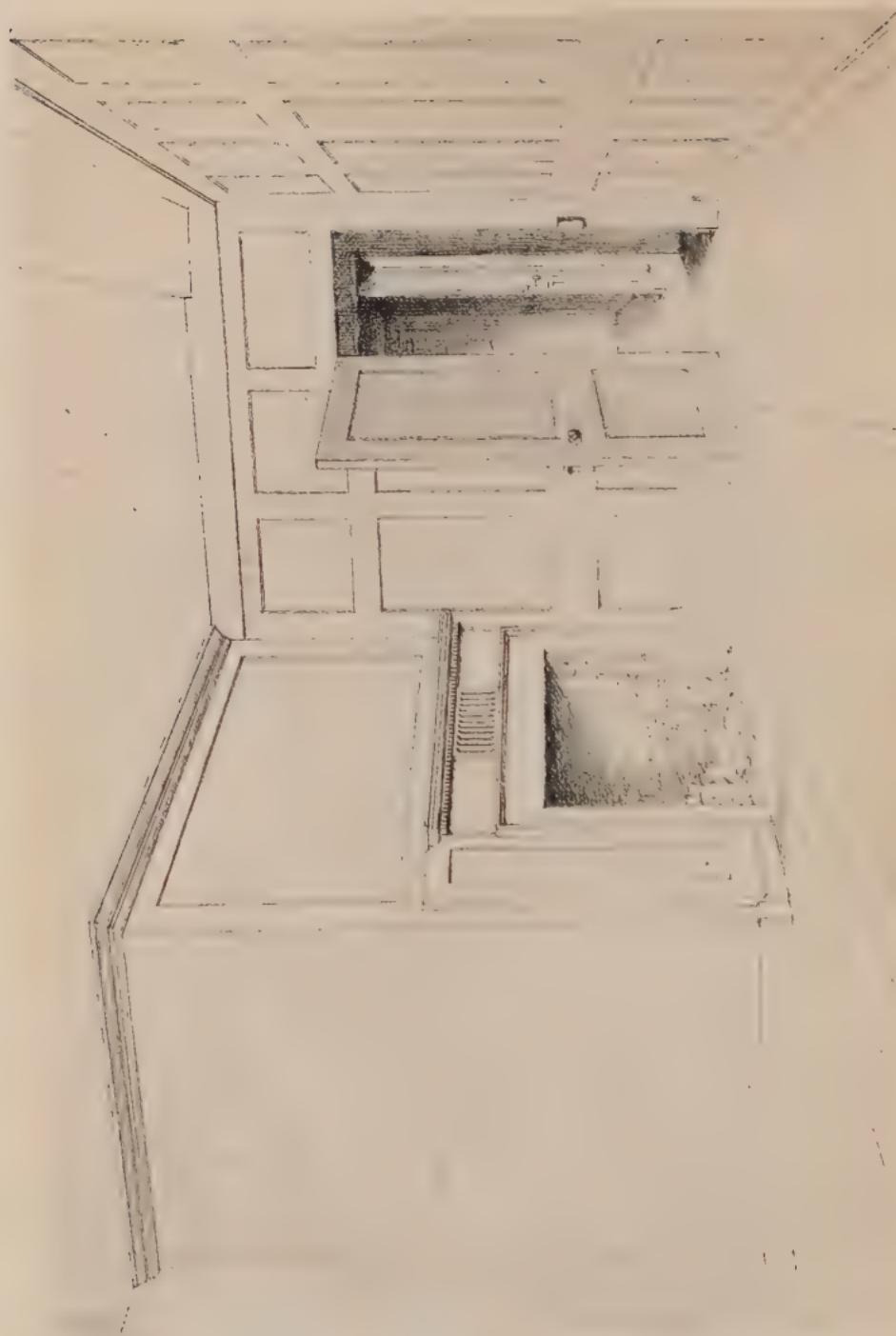
W. HALE WHITE.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D. From the portrait painted by
Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1756, and now in the
possession of C. Morrison, Esq. See Preface,
p. xxxi *Frontispiece*

JOHNSON'S HOUSE IN GOUGH SQUARE AS IT WAS IN THE
BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. *To face p. iv*

JOHNSON'S STUDY IN HIS HOUSE IN GOUGH SQUARE
To face p. 1



SELECTIONS FROM THE RAMBLER¹

PERHAPS no class of the human species requires more to be cautioned against this anticipation of happiness, than those that aspire to the name of authors. A man of lively fancy no sooner finds a hint moving in his mind, than he makes momentaneous excursions to the press, and to the world, and, with a little encouragement from flattery, pushes forward into future ages, and prognosticates the honours to be paid him, when envy is extinct, and faction forgotten, and those, whom partiality now suffers to obscure him, shall have given way to the triflers of as short duration as themselves.

Those who have proceeded so far as to appeal to the tribunal of succeeding times, are not likely to be cured of their infatuation; but all endeavours ought to be used for the prevention of a disease, for which, when it has attained its height, perhaps no remedy will be found in the gardens of philosophy, however she may boast her physick of the mind, her catharticks of vice, or lenitives of passion. . . .

It may not be unfit for him who makes a new entrance into the lettered world, so far to suspect his own powers, as to believe that he possibly may deserve neglect; that nature may not have qualified him much to enlarge or embellish knowledge, nor

¹ The number appended to each extract is that of the *Rambler* from which it is taken. The notes are by the present Editor.

sent him forth entitled by indisputable superiority to regulate the conduct of the rest of mankind ; that, though the world must be granted to be yet in ignorance, he is not destined to dispel the cloud, nor to shine out as one of the luminaries of life. For this suspicion, every catalogue of a library will furnish sufficient reason ; as he will find it crowded with names of men, who, though now forgotten, were once no less enterprizing or confident than himself, equally pleased with their own productions, equally caressed by their patrons, and flattered by their friends.

But though it should happen that an author is capable of excelling, yet his merit may pass without notice, huddled in the variety of things, and thrown into the general miscellany of life. He that endeavours after fame by writing, solicits the regard of a multitude fluctuating in pleasures or immersed in business, without time for intellectual amusements ; he appeals to judges, prepossessed by passions, or corrupted by prejudices, which preclude their approbation of any new performance. Some are too indolent to read any thing, till its reputation is established ; others too envious to promote that fame which gives them pain by its increase. What is new is opposed, because most are unwilling to be taught ; and what is known is rejected, because it is not sufficiently considered, that men more frequently require to be reminded than informed. The learned are afraid to declare their opinion early, lest they should put their reputation in hazard ; the ignorant always imagine themselves giving some proof of delicacy, when they refuse to be pleased : and he that finds his way to reputation through all these obstructions, must acknowledge that he is indebted to other causes besides his industry, his learning, or his wit.

There are thousands of the readers of romances willing to be thought wicked, if they may be allowed to be wits. It is therefore to be steadily inculcated, that virtue is the highest proof of understanding, and the only solid basis of greatness ; and that vice is the natural consequence of narrow thoughts ; that it begins in mistake, and ends in ignominy. [4]

Every man is sufficiently discontented with some circumstances of his present state, to suffer his imagination to range more or less in quest of future happiness, and to fix upon some point of time, in which, by the removal of the inconvenience which now perplexes him, or acquisition of the advantage which he at present wants, he shall find the condition of his life very much improved.

When this time, which is too often expected with great impatience, at last arrives, it generally comes without the blessing for which it was desired ; but we solace ourselves with some new prospect, and press forward again with equal eagerness.

It is lucky for a man, in whom this temper prevails, when he turns his hopes upon things wholly out of his own power ; since he forbears then to precipitate his affairs, for the sake of the great event that is to complete his felicity, and waits for the blissful hour with less neglect of the measures necessary to be taken in the mean time

* * * * *

A French author has advanced this seeming paradox, that *very few men know how to take a walk* ; and, indeed, it is true, that few know how to take a walk with a prospect of any other pleasure, than the same company would have afforded them at home.

There are animals that borrow their colour from the neighbouring body, and consequently vary their hue as they happen to change their place. In like manner, it ought to be the endeavour of every man to derive his reflections from the objects about him ; for it is to no purpose that he alters his position, if his attention continues fixed to the same point. The mind should be kept open to the access of every new idea, and so far disengaged from the predominance of particular thoughts, as easily to accommodate itself to occasional entertainment.

A man that has formed this habit of turning every new object to his entertainment, finds in the productions of nature an inexhaustible stock of materials upon which he can employ himself, without any temptations to envy or malevolence ; faults, perhaps, seldom totally avoided by those, whose judgment is much exercised upon the works of art. [5]

The general remedy of those, who are uneasy without knowing the cause, is change of place ; they are willing to imagine that their pain is the consequence of some local inconvenience, and endeavour to fly from it, as children from their shadows ; always hoping for some more satisfactory delight from every new scene, and always returning home with disappointment and complaints.

Who can look upon this kind of infatuation, without reflecting on those that suffer under the dreadful symptom of canine madness, termed by physicians the *dread of water*? These miserable wretches, unable to drink, though burning with thirst, are sometimes known to try various contortions, or inclinations of the body, flattering them-

selves that they can swallow in one posture that liquor which they find in another to repel their lips.

Yet such folly is not peculiar to the thoughtless or ignorant, but sometimes seizes those minds which seem most exempted from it, by the variety of attainments, quickness of penetration, or severity of judgment; and, indeed, the pride of wit and knowledge is often mortified by finding that they confer no security against the common errors, which mislead the weakest and meanest of mankind. . . .

The lover of retirement needs not be afraid lest the respect of strangers should overwhelm him with visits. Even those to whom he has formerly been known, will very patiently support his absence when they have tried a little to live without him, and found new diversions for those moments which his company contributed to exhilarate.

It was, perhaps, ordained by Providence, to hinder us from tyrannising over one another, that no individual should be of such importance, as to cause, by his retirement or death, any chasm in the world. . . .

[Cowley longing to retire to the American plantations¹] forgot in the vehemence of desire, that

¹ ‘My desire has been for some years past (though the execution has been accidentally diverted) and does still vehemently continue, to retire myself to some of our American plantations, not to seek for gold, or enrich myself with the traffic of those parts (which is the end of most men that travel thither; so that of these Indies it is truer than it was of the former

Improbus [impiger] extremos currit [curris] mercator ad Indos,
... pauperiem fugiens [Horat. *Epist.* i. 1, l. 45]

but to forsake the world for ever, with all the vanities and vexations of it, and to bury myself there in some obscure retreat (but not without the consolations of letters and philosophy)

Oblitusque meorum, obliviscendus et illis’ [Horat. *Epist.* i. 11, l. 9].—Cowley’s *Works*, vol. i, p. lvii, edition 1707.

solitude and quiet owe their pleasures to those miseries, which he was so studious to obviate: for such are the vicissitudes of the world, through all its parts, that day and night, labour and rest, hurry and retirement, endear each other; such are the changes that keep the mind in action; we desire, we pursue, we obtain, we are satiated; we desire something else, and begin a new pursuit. [6]

What men allow themselves to wish they will soon believe, and will be at last incited to execute what they please themselves with contriving. [8]

There is in the world a certain class of mortals known, and contentedly known, by the appellation of *passionate men*, who imagine themselves entitled by that distinction to be provoked on every slight occasion, and to vent their rage in vehement and fierce vociferations, in furious menaces and licentious reproaches. . . .

Pride is undoubtedly the original of anger; but pride, like every other passion, if it once breaks loose from reason, counteracts its own purposes. A passionate man upon the review of his day, will have very few gratifications to offer to his pride, when he has considered how his outrages were caused, why they were borne, and in what they are likely to end at last.

Those sudden bursts of rage generally break out upon small occasions; for life, unhappy as it is, cannot supply great evils as frequently as the man of fire thinks it fit to be enraged. [11]

The vanity of being known to be trusted with a secret, is generally one of the chief motives to disclose it ; for however absurd it may be thought to boast an honour by an act which shows that it was conferred without merit, yet most men seem rather inclined to confess the want of virtue than of importance, and more willingly show their influence, though at the expense of their probity, than glide through life with no other pleasure than the private consciousness of fidelity ; which, while it is preserved, must be without praise, except from the single person who tries and knows it. [13]

Nothing is more unjust, however common, than to charge with hypocrisy him that expresses zeal for those virtues which he neglects to practise ; since he may be sincerely convinced of the advantages of conquering his passions, without having yet obtained the victory, as a man may be confident of the advantages of a voyage, or a journey, without having courage or industry to undertake it, and may honestly recommend to others those attempts which he neglects himself.

The interest which the corrupt part of mankind have in hardening themselves against every motive to amendment, has disposed them to give to these contradictions, when they can be produced against the cause of virtue, that weight which they will not allow them in any other case. They see men act in opposition to their interest, without supposing that they do not know it ; those who give way to the sudden violence of passion, and forsake the most important pursuits for petty pleasures, are not supposed to have changed their opinions, or to approve their own

conduct. In moral or religious questions alone, they determine the sentiments by the actions, and charge every man with endeavouring to impose upon the world, whose writings are not confirmed by his life. They never consider that themselves neglect or practise something every day inconsistently with their own settled judgment, nor discover that the conduct of the advocates for virtue can little increase, or lessen, the obligations of their dictates ; argument is to be invalidated only by argument, and is in itself of the same force, whether or not it convinces him by whom it is proposed.

Yet since this prejudice, however unreasonable, is always likely to have some prevalence, it is the duty of every man to take care lest he should hinder the efficacy of his own instructions. When he desires to gain the belief of others, he should show that he believes himself ; and when he teaches the fitness of virtue by his reasonings, he should, by his example, prove its possibility : Thus much at least may be required of him, that he shall not act worse than others, because he writes better ; nor imagine that, by the merit of his genius, he may claim indulgence beyond mortals of the lower classes, and be excused for want of prudence, or neglect of virtue.

Bacon in his History of the Winds, after having offered something to the imagination as desirable, often proposes lower advantages in its place to the reason as attainable.¹ The same method may be sometimes pursued in moral endeavours, which this

¹ ‘ It will however be of service . . . to inspect and inquire thoroughly into the nature of the air ; to see if there be anything which, on being communicated in a small quantity to the air, can excite and multiply the motion of dilatation or contraction in the body of the air. For if this could be done the raising and calming of the winds would naturally follow. . . .

‘ *Desideratum*, a better method of ordering and disposing the

philosopher has observed in natural inquiries ; having first set positive and absolute excellence before us, we may be pardoned though we sink down to humbler virtue, trying, however, to keep our point always in view, and struggling not to lose ground, though we cannot gain it. [14]

I [Misellus, a new author] have been cautious, since the appearance of my work, not to give myself more premeditated airs of superiority, than the most rigid humility might allow. It is, indeed, not impossible that I may sometimes have laid down my opinion, in a manner that showed a consciousness of my ability to maintain it, or interrupted the conversation, when I saw its tendency, without suffering the speaker to waste his time in explaining his sentiments ; and, indeed, I did indulge myself for two days in a custom of drumming with my fingers, when the company began to lose themselves in absurdities, or to encroach upon subjects which I knew them unqualified to discuss. But I generally acted with great appearance of respect, even to those whose stupidity I pitied in my heart. Yet, notwithstanding this exemplary moderation, so universal is the dread of uncommon powers, and such the unwillingness of mankind to be made wiser, that I have now for some days found myself shunned by all my acquaintance. If I knock at a door, no body is at home ; if I enter a coffee-house, I have the box to myself. I live in the town like a lion in his desert, or an eagle on his rock, too great for friendship or society, and condemned

sails of ships, so as to make more way with less wind ; a thing very useful in shortening sea voyages and saving expense.---*Historia Ventorum*, Mr. Headlam's translation in Ellis and Spedding's edition, vol. v.

to solitude by unhappy elevation and dreaded ascendancy.

Nor is my character only formidable to others, but burdensome to myself. I naturally love to talk without much thinking, to scatter my merriment at random, and to relax my thoughts with ludicrous remarks and fanciful images; but such is now the importance of my opinion, that I am afraid to offer it, lest, by being established too hastily into a maxim, it should be the occasion of error to half the nation; and such is the expectation with which I am attended, when I am going to speak, that I frequently pause to reflect whether what I am about to utter is worthy of myself.

This, Sir, is sufficiently miserable; but there are still greater calamities behind. You must have read in Pope and Swift how men of parts have had their closets rifled, and their cabinets broke open, at the instigation of piratical booksellers, for the profit of their works; and it is apparent that there are many prints now sold in the shops, of men whom you cannot suspect of sitting for that purpose, and whose likenesses must have been certainly stolen when their names made their faces vendible. These considerations at first put me on my guard, and I have, indeed, found sufficient reason for my caution, for I have discovered many people examining my countenance with a curiosity that showed their intention to draw it: I immediately left the house, but find the same behaviour in another.

[16]

I have often thought those happy that have been fixed, from the first dawn of thought, in a determination to some state of life, by the choice of one whose

authority may preclude caprice, and whose influence may prejudice them in favour of his opinion. The general precept of consulting the genius is of little use, unless we are told how the genius can be known. If it is to be discovered only by experiment, life will be lost before the resolution can be fixed ; if any other indications are to be found, they may, perhaps, be very early discerned. At least, if to miscarry in an attempt be a proof of having mistaken the direction of the genius, men appear not less frequently deceived with regard to themselves than to others ; and therefore no one has much reason to complain that his life was planned out by his friends, or to be confident that he should have had either more honour or happiness, by being abandoned to the chance of his own fancy.

It was said of the learned bishop Sanderson, that when he was preparing his lectures, he hesitated so much, and rejected so often, that, at the time of reading, he was often forced to produce, not what was best, but what happened to be at hand.¹ This will be the state of every man, who, in the choice of his

¹ ‘And though he was blest with a clearer judgment than other men, yet he was so distrustful of it, that he did over-consider of consequences, and would so delay and re-consider what to determine, that though ~~none~~ ever determined better, yet, when the bell tolled for him to appear and read his divinity lectures in Oxford, and all the scholars attended to hear him, he had not then, or not till then, resolved and writ what he meant to determine ; so that that appeared to be a truth, which his old dear friend Dr. Sheldon would often say, namely, “that his judgment was so much superior to his fancy, that whatsoever this suggested, that disliked and controlled : still considering and reconsidering, till his time was so wasted, that he was forced to write, not probably what was best, but what he thought last.” And yet what he did then read appeared to all hearers to be so useful, clear, and satisfactory, as none ever determined with greater applause.’—Walton’s *Life of Dr. Robert Sanderson*.

employment, balances all the arguments on every side ; the complication is so intricate, the motives and objections so numerous, there is so much play for the imagination, and so much remains in the power of others, that reason is forced at last to rest in neutrality, the decision devolves into the hands of chance, and after a great part of life spent in inquiries which can never be resolved, the rest must often pass in repenting the unnecessary delay, and can be useful to few other purposes than to warn others against the same folly and to show that of two states of life equally consistent with religion and virtue, he who chooses earliest chooses best.

[19]

When Lee was once told by a critick, that it was very easy to write like a madman ; he answered, that it was difficult to write like a madman, but easy enough to write like a fool ; and I hope to be excused by my kind contributors, if, in imitation of this great author, I presume to remind them, that it is much easier not to write like a man, than to write like a woman. . . .

Affectation is to be always distinguished from hypocrisy, as being the art of counterfeiting those qualities which we might, with innocence and safety, be known to want. Thus the man who, to carry on any fraud, or to conceal any crime, pretends to rigours of devotion, and exactness of life, is guilty of hypocrisy ; and his guilt is greater, as the end, for which he puts on the false appearance, is more pernicious. But he that, with an awkward address, and unpleasing countenance, boasts of the conquests made by him among the ladies, and counts over the thousands which he might have possessed if he would

have submitted to the yoke of matrimony, is chargeable only with affectation. Hypocrisy is the necessary burthen of villainy, affectation part of the chosen trappings of folly; the one completes a villain, the other only finishes a fop. Contempt is the proper punishment of affectation, and detestation the just consequence of hypocrisy. . . .

Applause and admiration are by no means to be counted among the necessaries of life, and therefore any indirect arts to obtain them have very little claim to pardon or compassion. There is scarcely any man without some valuable or improveable qualities, by which he might always secure himself from contempt. And perhaps exemption from ignominy is the most eligible reputation, as freedom from pain is, among some philosophers, the definition of happiness.

[20]

Among the motives that urge an author to undertakings by which his reputation is impaired, one of the most frequent must be mentioned with tenderness, because it is not to be counted among his follies, but his miseries. It very often happens that the works of learning or of wit are performed at the direction of those by whom they are to be rewarded; the writer has not always the choice of his subject, but is compelled to accept any task which is thrown before him without much consideration of his own convenience, and without time to prepare himself by previous studies.

Miscarriages of this kind are likewise frequently the consequence of that acquaintance with the great, which is generally considered as one of the chief privileges of literature and genius. A man who has

once learned to think himself exalted by familiarity with those whom nothing but their birth, or their fortunes, or such stations as are seldom gained by moral excellence, set above him, will not be long without submitting his understanding to their conduct; he will suffer them to prescribe the course of his studies, and employ him for their own purposes either of diversion or interest. His desire of pleasing those whose favour he has weakly made necessary to himself, will not suffer him always to consider how little he is qualified for the work imposed. Either his vanity will tempt him to conceal his deficiencies, or that cowardice, which always encroaches fast upon such as spend their lives in the company of persons higher than themselves, will not leave him resolution to assert the liberty of choice. . . .

He that happens not to be lulled by praise into supineness, may be animated by it to undertakings above his strength, or incited to fancy himself alike qualified for every kind of composition, and able to comply with the publick taste through all its variations. By some opinion like this, many men have been engaged, at an advanced age, in attempts which they had not time to complete, and after a few weak efforts, sunk into the grave with vexation to see the rising generation gain ground upon them. From these failures the highest genius is not exempt; that judgment which appears so penetrating, when it is employed upon the works of others, very often fails where interest or passion can exert their power. We are blinded in examining our own labours by innumerable prejudices. Our juvenile compositions please us, because they bring to our minds the remembrance of youth; our later performances we are ready to esteem, because we are

unwilling to think that we have made no improvement ; what flows easily from the pen charms us, because we read with pleasure that which flatters our opinion of our own powers ; what was composed with great struggles of the mind we do not easily reject, because we cannot bear that so much labour should be fruitless. But the reader has none of these prepossessions, and wonders that the author is so unlike himself, without considering that the same soil will, with different culture, afford different products. [21]

Taste and Grace, Purity and Delicacy, Manners and Unities, sounds which, having been once uttered by those that understood them, have been since re-echoed without meaning, and kept up to the disturbance of the world, by a constant repercussion from one coxcomb to another. [23]

Of all the bugbears by which the *Infantes barbati*, boys both young and old, have been hitherto frightened from digressing into new tracts of learning, none has been more mischievously efficacious than an opinion that every kind of knowledge requires a peculiar genius, or mental constitution, framed for the reception of some ideas, and the exclusion of others ; and that to him whose genius is not adapted to the study which he prosecutes, all labour shall be vain and fruitless, vain as an endeavour to mingle oil and water, or, in the language of chemistry, to amalgamate bodies of heterogeneous principles. [25]

I [a young wit upon town seeking a place] had now entered into a state of dependence, and had hopes, or fears, from almost every man I saw. If it be unhappy to have one patron, what is his misery who has many? I was obliged to comply with a thousand caprices, to concur in a thousand follies, and to countenance a thousand errors. I endured innumerable mortifications, if not from cruelty, at least from negligence, which will creep in upon the kindest and most delicate minds, when they converse without the mutual awe of equal condition. I found the spirit and vigour of liberty every moment sinking in me, and a servile fear of displeasing stealing by degrees upon all my behaviour, till no word, or look, or action, was my own. As the solicitude to please increased, the power of pleasing grew less, and I was always clouded with diffidence where it was most my interest and wish to shine.

[26]

Vagario told me [the young wit of the preceding number] one evening, that all my perplexities should be soon at an end, and desired me, from that instant, to throw upon him all care of my fortune, for a post of considerable value was that day become vacant, and he knew his interest sufficient to procure it in the morning. He desired me to call on him early, that he might be dressed soon enough to wait on the minister before any other application should be made. I came as he appointed, with all the flame of gratitude, and was told by his servant, that having found at his lodgings, when he came home, an acquaintance who was going to travel, he had been persuaded to accompany him to Dover,

and that they had taken post-horses two hours before day.

I was once very near to preferment, by the kindness of Charinus, who, at my request, went to beg a place, which he thought me likely to fill with great reputation, and in which I should have many opportunities of promoting his interest in return ; and he pleased himself with imagining the mutual benefits that we should confer, and the advances that we should make by our united strength. Away therefore he went, equally warm with friendship and ambition, and left me to prepare acknowledgments against his return. At length he came back, and told me that he had met in his way a party going to breakfast in the country, that the ladies importuned him too much to be refused, and that having passed the morning with them, he was come back to dress himself for a ball, to which he was invited for the evening. . . .

You will not wonder that I was at last weary of the patronage of young men, especially as I found them not generally to promise much greater fidelity as they advanced in life ; for I observed that what they gained in steadiness they lost in benevolence, and grew colder to my interest as they became more diligent to promote their own. I was convinced that their liberality was only profuseness, that as chance directed, they were equally generous to vice and virtue, that they were warm but because they were thoughtless, and counted the support of a friend only amongst other gratifications of passion. [27]

One sophism by which men persuade themselves that they have those virtues which they really want, is formed by the substitution of single acts for

habits. A miser who once relieved a friend from the danger of a prison, suffers his imagination to dwell for ever upon his own heroic generosity ; he yields his heart up to indignation at those who are blind to merit, or insensible to misery, and who can please themselves with the enjoyment of that wealth, which they never permit others to partake. From any censures of the world, or reproaches of his conscience, he has an appeal to action and to knowledge : and though his whole life is a course of rapacity and avarice, he concludes himself to be tender and liberal, because he has once performed an act of liberality and tenderness.

As a glass which magnifies objects by the approach of one end to the eye, lessens them by the application of the other, so vices are extenuated by the inversion of that fallacy, by which virtues are augmented. Those faults which we cannot conceal from our own notice, are considered, however frequent, not as habitual corruptions, or settled practices, but as casual failures, and single lapses. A man who has from year to year set his country to sale, either for the gratification of his ambition or resentment, confesses that the heat of party now and then betrays the severest virtue to measures that cannot be seriously defended. He that spends his days and nights in riot and debauchery, owns that his passions oftentimes overpower his resolutions. But each comforts himself that his faults are not without precedent, for the best and the wisest men have given way to the violence of sudden temptations. [28]

It is a maxim commonly received, that a wise man is never surprized ; and, perhaps, this exemp-

tion from astonishment may be imagined to proceed from such a prospect into futurity, as gave previous intimation of those evils which often fall unexpected upon others that have less foresight. But the truth is, that things to come, except when they approach very nearly, are equally hidden from men of all degrees of understanding ; and if a wise man is not amazed at sudden occurrences, it is not that he has thought more, but less upon futurity. He never considered things not yet existing as the proper objects of his attention ; he never indulged dreams till he was deceived by their phantoms, nor ever realized nonentities to his mind. He is not surprized because he is not disappointed, and he escapes disappointment because he never forms any expectations.

The concern about things to come, that is so justly censured, is not the result of those general reflections on the variableness of fortune, the uncertainty of life, and the universal insecurity of all human acquisitions, which must always be suggested by the view of the world ; but such a desponding anticipation of misfortune, as fixes the mind upon scenes of gloom and melancholy, and makes fear predominate in every imagination.

Anxiety of this kind is nearly of the same nature with jealousy in love, and suspicion in the general commerce of life ; a temper which keeps the man always in alarms ; disposes him to judge of every thing in a manner that least favours his own quiet, fills him with perpetual stratagems of counteraction, wears him out in schemes to obviate evils which never threatened him, and, at length, perhaps, contributes to the production of those mischiefs of which it had raised such dreadful apprehensions.

It has been usual in all ages for moralists to

repress the swellings of vain hope by representations of the innumerable casualties to which life is subject, and by instances of the unexpected defeat of the wisest schemes of policy, and sudden subversions of the highest eminences of greatness. It has, perhaps, not been equally observed, that all these examples afford the proper antidote to fear as well as to hope, and may be applied with no less efficacy as consolations to the timorous, than as restraints to the proud. . . .

The misfortunes which arise from the concurrence of unhappy incidents should never be suffered to disturb us before they happen; because, if the breast be once laid open to the dread of mere possibilities of misery, life must be given a prey to dismal solicitude, and quiet must be lost for ever.

It is remarked by old Cornaro, that it is absurd to be afraid of the natural dissolution of the body, because it must certainly happen, and can, by no caution or artifice, be avoided.¹ Whether this sentiment be entirely just, I shall not examine; but certainly if it be improper to fear events which must happen, it is yet more evidently contrary to right reason to fear those which may never happen, and which, if they should come upon us, we cannot resist.

As we ought not to give way to fear, any more than indulgence to hope, because the objects both of fear and hope are yet uncertain, so we ought not to trust the representations of one more than of the other, because they are both equally fallacious; as hope enlarges happiness, fear aggravates calamity.

¹ ‘I am not so simple as not to know, that as I was born, so I must die. But that is a desirable death, which nature brings on us by way of dissolution.’—*Sure methods of attaining a long and healthful life, &c.* By Lewis Cornaro. English translation, 1821, p. 65.

It is generally allowed, that no man ever found the happiness of possession proportionate to that expectation which incited his desire, and invigorated his pursuit ; nor has any man found the evils of life so formidable in reality, as they were described to him by his own imagination ; every species of distress brings with it some peculiar supports, some unforeseen means of resisting, or power of enduring. Taylor justly blames some pious persons, who indulge their fancies too much, set themselves, by the force of imagination, in the place of the ancient martyrs and confessors, and question the validity of their own faith because they shrink at the thoughts of flames and tortures. It is, says he, sufficient that you are able to encounter the temptations which now assault you ; when God sends trials, he may send strength.¹

All fear is in itself painful, and when it conduces not to safety is painful without use. Every consideration, therefore, by which groundless terrors may be removed, adds something to human happiness. It is likewise not unworthy of remark, that in proportion as our cares are employed upon the future they are abstracted from the present, from the only time which we can call our own, and of which if we neglect the duties to make provision against visionary

¹ ‘Believe in God, who it may be will not give you strengths before you need them ; and therefore be satisfied with thus much, that your present strength is sufficient for any present trial ; and when a greater comes, God has promised to give you more strength when you shall have need of more. . . . Do not ask yourself whether you would endure the rack for God, or the application of burning basons to your eyes, or the torment of a slow fire, or whether you had rather go to hell than commit a sin ; this is too fantastic a trial ; and when God (it may be) knowing your weakness will never put you to it really, do not you tempt yourself by fancy and an afflictive representation.’—*The Worthy Communicant*, chap. ii, section 3.

attacks, we shall certainly counteract our own purpose; for he, doubtless, mistakes his true interest, who thinks that he can increase his safety when he impairs his virtue. [29]

If it be true that most of our passions are excited by the novelty of objects, there is little reason for doubting, that to be considered as subject to fallacies of ratiocination, or imperfection of knowledge, is to a great part of mankind entirely new; for it is impossible to fall into any company where there is not some regular and established subordination, without finding rage and vehemence produced only by difference of sentiments about things in which neither of the disputants have any other interest, than what proceeds from their mutual unwillingness to give way to any opinion that may bring upon them the disgrace of being wrong.

I have heard of one that, having advanced some erroneous doctrines in philosophy, refused to see the experiments by which they were confuted¹: and the observation of every day will give new proofs with how much industry subterfuges and evasions

¹ 'Among other sticklers for conservatism were the celebrated professors, Cesare Cremonino of Padua, one of Galileo's colleagues, and Julius Libri of Pisa, both of whom peremptorily rejected, on *a priori* grounds, Galileo's discoveries [Jupiter's satellites] and the conclusions he drew from them. Libri died in December, 1610, refusing to look through a telescope, and stigmatising to the last the "absurdities" of the presumptuous Florentine. In communicating the news of Libri's death to his friend Welser (December 17) Galileo expressed the hope that this stiff-necked opponent of his "absurdities," who would not look at them from earth, might now perhaps see them on his way to heaven.'—*Galileo, His Life and Work*. By J. J. Fahie, p. 101.

are sought to decline the pressure of resistless arguments, how often the state of the question is altered, how often the antagonist is wilfully misrepresented, and in how much perplexity the clearest positions are involved by those whom they happen to oppose. . . .

It is not unpleasing to remark with what solicitude men of acknowledged abilities will endeavour to palliate absurdities and reconcile contradictions, only to obviate criticisms to which all human performances must ever be exposed, and from which they can never suffer, but when they teach the world by a vain and ridiculous impatience to think them of importance. . . .

We may, with very little inquietude, see a man persist in a project which he has found to be impracticable, live in an inconvenient house because it was contrived by himself, or wear a coat of a particular cut, in hopes by perseverance to bring it into fashion. These are indeed follies, but they are only follies, and, however wild or ridiculous, can very little affect others.

But such pride, once indulged, too frequently operates upon more important objects, and inclines men not only to vindicate their errors, but their vices; to persist in practices which their own hearts condemn, only lest they should seem to feel reproaches, or be made wiser by the advice of others; or to search for sophisms tending to the confusion of all principles, and the evacuation of all duties, that they may not appear to act what they are not able to defend. . . .

But if it be supposed that [a man] may impose on his audience by partial representations of consequences, intricate deductions of remote causes, or perplexed combinations of ideas, which having various rela-

tions, appear different as viewed on different sides ; that he may sometimes puzzle the weak and well-meaning, and now and then seduce, by the admiration of his abilities, a young mind still fluctuating in unsettled notions, and neither fortified by instruction nor enlightened by experience ; yet what must be the event of such a triumph ! A man cannot spend all this life in frolick : age, or disease, or solitude, will bring some hours of serious consideration, and it will then afford no comfort to think, that he has extended the dominion of vice, that he has loaded himself with the crimes of others, and can never know the extent of his own wickedness, or make reparation for the mischief that he has caused. There is not, perhaps, in all the stores of ideal anguish, a thought more painful, than the consciousness of having propagated corruption by vitiating principles, of having not only drawn others from the paths of virtue, but blocked up the way by which they should return, of having blinded them to every beauty but the paint of pleasure, and deafened them to every call but the alluring voice of the syrens of destruction.

There is yet another danger in this practice : men who cannot deceive others, are very often successful in deceiving themselves ; they weave their sophistry till their own reason is entangled, and repeat their positions till they are credited by themselves ; by often contending, they grow sincere in the cause ; and by long wishing for demonstrative arguments, they at last bring themselves to fancy that they have found them. They are then at the uttermost verge of wickedness, and may die without having that light rekindled in their minds, which their own pride and contumacy have extinguished. [31]

The cure for the greatest part of human miseries is not radical but palliative. Infelicity is involved in corporeal nature, and interwoven with our being; all attempts therefore to decline it wholly are useless and vain: the armies of pain send their arrows against us on every side, the choice is only between those which are more or less sharp, or tinged with poison of greater or less malignity; and the strongest armour which reason can supply, will only blunt their points, but cannot repel them.

The great remedy which heaven has put in our hands is patience, by which, though we cannot lessen the torments of the body, we can in a great measure preserve the peace of the mind, and shall suffer only the natural and genuine force of an evil, without heightening its acrimony, or prolonging its effects. . . .

In all evils which admit a remedy, impatience is to be avoided, because it wastes that time and attention in complaints, that, if properly applied, might remove the cause. Turenne, among the acknowledgments which he used to pay in conversation to the memory of those by whom he had been instructed in the art of war, mentioned one with honour, who taught him not to spend his time in regretting any mistake which he had made, but to set himself immediately and vigorously to repair it.¹ . . .

This duty [patience and submission] is not more difficult in any state than in diseases intensely painful, which may indeed suffer such exacerbations as seem to strain the powers of life to their utmost stretch, and leave very little of the attention vacant

¹ ‘Qu'il étoit plus occupé à réparer ses fautes, qu'à perdre son temps en apologies.’ Ramsay, *Histoire du Vicomte de Turenne*, livre 1, p. 109, edition 1749.

to precept or reproof. In this state the nature of man requires some indulgence, and every extravagance but impiety may be easily forgiven him. Yet, lest we should think ourselves too soon entitled to the mournful privileges of irresistible misery, it is proper to reflect, that the utmost anguish which human wit can contrive, or human malice can inflict, has been borne with constancy; and that if the pains of disease be, as I believe they are, sometimes greater than those of artificial torture, they are therefore in their own nature shorter: the vital frame is quickly broken, or the union between soul and body is for a time suspended by insensibility, and we soon cease to feel our maladies when they once become too violent to be borne. I think there is some reason for questioning whether the body and mind are not so proportioned, that the one can bear all that can be inflicted on the other, whether virtue cannot stand its ground as long as life, and whether a soul well principled will not be separated sooner than subdued.

[32]

It is decreed by Providence, that nothing truly valuable shall be obtained in our present state, but with difficulty and danger. He that hopes for that advantage which is to be gained from unrestrained communication, must sometimes hazard, by unpleasing truths, that friendship which he aspires to merit. The chief rule to be observed in the exercise of this dangerous office, is to preserve it pure from all mixture of interest or vanity; to forbear admonition or reproof, when our consciences tell us that they are incited, not by the hopes of reforming faults, but the desire of showing our

discernment, or gratifying our own pride by the mortification of another. It is not indeed certain, that the most refined caution will find a proper time for bringing a man to the knowledge of his own failings, or the most zealous benevolence reconcile him to that judgment, by which they are detected; but he who endeavours only the happiness of him whom he reproves, will always have either the satisfaction of obtaining or deserving kindness; if he succeeds, he benefits his friend; and if he fails, he has at least the consciousness that he suffers for only doing well. [40]

I believe . . . that marriage is not commonly unhappy, otherwise than as life is unhappy; and that most of those who complain of connubial miseries, have as much satisfaction as their nature would have admitted, or their conduct procured, in any other condition. . . .

Wives and husbands are, indeed, incessantly complaining of each other; and there would be reason for imagining that almost every house was infested with perverseness or oppression beyond human sufferance, did we not know upon how small occasions some minds burst out into lamentations and reproaches, and how naturally every animal revenges his pain upon those who happen to be near, without any nice examination of its cause. We are always willing to fancy ourselves within a little of happiness, and when, with repeated efforts, we cannot reach it, persuade ourselves that it is intercepted by an ill-paired mate, since, if we could find any other obstacle, it would be our own fault that it was not removed. . . .

When I see the avaricious and the crafty taking

companions to their tables, and their beds, without any inquiry, but after farms and money; or the giddy and thoughtless uniting themselves for life to those whom they have only seen by the light of tapers at a ball; when parents make articles for their children, without inquiring after their consent; when some marry for heirs to disappoint their brothers, and others throw themselves into the arms of those whom they do not love, because they have found themselves rejected where they were most solicitous to please: when some marry because their servants cheat them, some because they squander their own money, some because their houses are pestered with company, some because they will live like other people, and some only because they are sick of themselves, I am not so much inclined to wonder that marriage is sometimes unhappy, as that it appears so little loaded with calamity; and cannot but conclude that society has something in itself eminently agreeable to human nature, when I find its pleasures so great, that even the ill choice of a companion can hardly overbalance them.

By the ancient custom of the Muscovites, the men and women never saw each other till they were joined beyond the power of parting. It may be suspected that by this method many unsuitable matches were produced, and many tempers associated that were not qualified to give pleasure to each other. Yet, perhaps, among a people so little delicate, where the paucity of gratifications, and the uniformity of life, gave no opportunity for imagination to interpose its objections, there was not much danger of capricious dislike; and while they felt neither cold nor hunger, they might live quietly together, without any thought of the defects of one another.

Amongst us, whom knowledge has made nice, and affluence wanton, there are, indeed, more cautions requisite to secure tranquillity; and yet if we observe the manner in which those converse, who have singled out each other for marriage, we shall, perhaps, not think that the Russians lost much by their restraint. For the whole endeavour of both parties, during the time of courtship, is to hinder themselves from being known, and to disguise their natural temper, and real desires, in hypocritical imitation, studied compliance, and continual affection. From the time that their love is avowed, neither sees the other but in a mask, and the cheat is managed often on both sides with so much art, and discovered afterwards with so much abruptness, that each has reason to suspect that some transformation has happened on the wedding night, and that, by a strange imposture, one has been courted, and another married.

[45]

The safe and general antidote against sorrow is employment. It is commonly observed, that among soldiers and seamen, though there is much kindness, there is little grief; they see their friend fall without any of that lamentation which is indulged in security and idleness, because they have no leisure to spare from the care of themselves; and whoever shall keep his thoughts equally busy, will find himself equally unaffected with irretrievable losses. . . .

Sorrow is a kind of rust of the soul, which every new idea contributes in its passage to scour away. It is the putrefaction of stagnant life, and is remedied by exercise and motion.

[47]

To the arguments which have been used against complaints under the miseries of life, the philosophers have, I think, forgot to add the incredulity of those to whom we recount our sufferings. But if the purpose of lamentation be to excite pity, it is surely superfluous for age and weakness to tell their plaintive stories; for pity presupposes sympathy, and a little attention will show them, that those who do not feel pain, seldom think that it is felt; and a short recollection will inform almost every man, that he is only repaid the insult which he has given, since he may remember how often he has mocked infirmity, laughed at its cautions, and censured its impatience. . . .

It may be said that disease generally begins that equality which death completes; the distinctions which set one man so much above another are very little perceived in the gloom of a sick chamber, where it will be vain to expect entertainment from the gay, or instruction from the wise; where all human glory is obliterated, the wit is clouded, the reasoner perplexed, and the hero subdued; where the highest and brightest of mortal beings finds nothing left him but the consciousness of innocence.

[48]

There are certain fixed and stated reproaches that one part of mankind has in all ages thrown upon another, which are regularly transmitted through continued successions, and which he that has once suffered them is certain to use with the same undistinguishing vehemence, when he has changed his station, and gained the prescriptive right of inflicting on others what he had formerly endured himself. . . .

There are, indeed, many truths which time necessarily and certainly teaches, and which might, by those who have learned them from experience, be communicated to their successors at a cheaper rate: but dictates, though liberally enough bestowed, are generally without effect, the teacher gains few proselytes by instruction which his own behaviour contradicts; and young men miss the benefit of counsel, because they are not very ready to believe that those who fall below them in practice, can much excel them in theory. Thus the progress of knowledge is retarded, the world is kept long in the same state, and every new race is to gain the prudence of their predecessors by committing and redressing the same miscarriages.

To secure to the old that influence which they are willing to claim, and which might so much contribute to the improvement of the arts of life, it is absolutely necessary that they give themselves up to the duties of declining years; and contentedly resign to youth its levity, its pleasures, its frolics and its fopperies. It is a hopeless endeavour to unite the contrarieties of spring and winter; it is unjust to claim the privileges of age and retain the playthings of childhood. The young always form magnificent ideas of the wisdom and gravity of men, whom they consider as placed at a distance from them in the ranks of existence, and naturally look on those, whom they find trifling with long beards, with contempt and indignation, like that which women feel at the effeminacy of men. If dotards will contend with boys in those performances in which boys must always excel them, if they will dress crippled limbs in embroidery, endeavour at gaiety with faltering voices, and darken assemblies of pleasure with the ghastliness of disease, they may well expect those who

find their diversions obstructed will hoot them away ; and that if they descend to competition with youth, they must bear the insolence of successful rivals.

*Lusisti satis, edisti satis, atque bibisti :
Tempus abire tibi est.¹*

You've had your share of mirth, of meat and drink ;
'Tis time to quit the scene—'tis time to think.

ELPHINSTON.

Another vice of age, by which the rising generation may be alienated from it, is severity and censoriousness, that gives no allowance to the failings of early life, that expects artfulness from childhood, and constancy from youth, that is peremptory in every command, and inexorable to every failure. There are many who live merely to hinder happiness, and whose descendants can only tell of long life, that it produces suspicion, malignity, peevishness, and persecution : and yet even these tyrants can talk of the ingratitude of the age, curse their heirs for impatience, and wonder that young men cannot take pleasure in their father's company.

He that would pass the latter part of life with honour and decency, must, when he is young, consider that he shall one day be old ; and remember, when he is old, that he has once been young. In youth, he must lay up knowledge for his support, when his powers of acting shall forsake him ; and in age forbear to animadvert with rigour on faults which experience only can correct. [50]

There are, however, some things in the culinary sciences too sublime for youthful intellects, mysteries

¹ Horat. *Epist.* ii. 2, ll. 214-15.

into which they must not be initiated till the years of serious maturity, and which are referred to the day of marriage, as the supreme qualification for connubial life. She [Lady Bustle, a country lady in the eighteenth century] makes an orange pudding, which is the envy of all the neighbourhood, and which she has hitherto found means of mixing and baking with such secrecy, that the ingredient to which it owes its flavour has never been discovered. She, indeed, conducts this great affair with all the caution that human policy can suggest. It is never known before-hand when this pudding will be produced ; she takes the ingredients privately into her own closet, employs her maids and daughters in different parts of the house, orders the oven to be heated for a pie, and places the pudding in it with her own hands, the mouth of the oven is then stopped, and all inquiries are vain.

The composition of the pudding she has, however, promised Clarinda, that if she pleases her in marriage, she shall be told without reserve. But the art of making English capers she has not yet persuaded herself to discover, but seems resolved that secret shall perish with her, as some alchymists have obstinately suppressed the art of transmuting metals. . . .

Lady Bustle has, indeed, by this incessant application to fruits and flowers, contracted her cares into a narrow space, and set herself free from many perplexities with which other minds are disturbed. She has no curiosity after the events of a war, or the fate of heroes in distress ; she can hear, without the least emotion, the ravage of a fire, or devastations of a storm ; her neighbours grow rich or poor, come into the world or go out of it, without regard, while she is pressing the gelly-bag, or airing the store-room ; but I cannot perceive that she is more

free from disquiets than those whose understandings take a wider range. Her marigolds¹, when they are almost cured, are often scattered by the wind, and the rain sometimes falls upon fruit when it ought to be gathered dry. While her artificial wines are fermenting, her whole life is restlessness and anxiety. Her sweetmeats are not always bright, and the maid sometimes forgets the just proportions of salt and pepper, when venison is to be baked. Her conserves mould, her wines sour, and pickles mother²; and, like all the rest of mankind, she is every day mortified with the defeat of her schemes, and the disappointment of her hopes.

With regard to vice and virtue she seems a kind of neutral being. She has no crime but luxury, nor any virtue but chastity; she has no desire to be praised but for her cookery; nor wishes any ill to the rest of mankind, but that whenever they aspire to a feast, their custards may be wheyish, and their pie-crusts tough.

[51]

There is not, perhaps, to a mind well instructed, a more painful occurrence, than the death of one whom we have injured without reparation. Our crime seems now irretrievable, it is indelibly recorded, and the stamp of fate is fixed upon it. We consider, with the most afflictive anguish, the pain which we have given, and now cannot alleviate, and the losses which we have caused, and now cannot repair.

¹ ‘Conserve made of the floures [of marigolds] and sugar, taken in the morning fasting, cureth the trembling of the heart, and is also given in time of plague or pestilence, or corruption of the aire.’—Gerarde’s *Herball*. The plant was also supposed to possess other medicinal virtues.

² Moulder.

Of the same kind are the emotions which the death of an emulator or competitor produces. Whoever had qualities to alarm our jealousy, had excellence to deserve our fondness; and to whatever ardour of opposition interest may inflame us, no man ever outlived an enemy, whom he did not then wish to have made a friend. . . .

Let us therefore make haste to do what we shall certainly at last wish to have done; let us return the caresses of our friends, and endeavour by mutual endearments to heighten that tenderness which is the balm of life. Let us be quick to repent of injuries while repentance may not be a barren anguish, and let us open our eyes to every rival excellence, and pay early and willingly those honours which justice will compel us to pay at last. [54]

I have therefore frequently looked with wonder, and now and then with pity, at the thoughtlessness with which some alienate from themselves the affections of all whom chance, business, or inclination, brings in their way. When we see a man pursuing some darling interest, without much regard to the opinion of the world, we justly consider him as corrupt and dangerous, but are not long in discovering his motives; we see him actuated by passions which are hard to be resisted, and deluded by appearances which have dazzled stronger eyes. But the greater part of those who set mankind at defiance by hourly irritation, and who live but to infuse malignity, and multiply enemies, have no hopes to foster, no designs to promote, nor any expectations of attaining power by insolence, or of climbing to greatness by trampling on others. They

give up all the sweets of kindness, for the sake of peevishness, petulance, or gloom ; and alienate the world by neglect of the common forms of civility, and breach of the established laws of conversation.

Every one must, in the walks of life, have met with men of whom all speak with censure, though they are not chargeable with any crime, and whom none can be persuaded to love, though a reason can scarcely be assigned why they should be hated ; and who, if their good qualities and actions sometimes force a commendation, have their panegyrick always concluded with confessions of disgust ; ‘he is a good man, but I cannot like him.’ Surely such persons have sold the esteem of the world at too low a price, since they have lost one of the rewards of virtue, without gaining the profits of wickedness.

This ill economy of fame is sometimes the effect of stupidity : Men whose perceptions are languid and sluggish, who lament nothing but loss of money, and feel nothing but a blow, are often at a difficulty to guess why they are encompassed with enemies, though they neglect all those arts by which men are endeared to one another. They comfort themselves that they have lived irreproachably ; that none can charge them with having endangered his life, or diminished his possessions ; and therefore conclude that they suffer by some invincible fatality, or impute the malice of their neighbours to ignorance or envy. They wrap themselves up in their innocence, and enjoy the congratulations of their own hearts, without knowing or suspecting that they are every day deservedly incurring resentments, by withholding from those with whom they converse that regard, or appearance of regard, to which every one is entitled by the customs of the world. [56]

Having lived a life of business, and remarked how seldom any occurrences emerge for which great qualities are required, I have learned the necessity of regarding little things; and though I do not pretend to give laws to the legislators of mankind, or to limit the range of those powerful minds that carry light and heat through all the regions of knowledge, yet I have long thought, that the greatest part of those who lose themselves in studies by which I have not found that they grow much wiser, might, with more advantage both to the publick and themselves, apply their understandings to domestick arts, and store their minds with axioms of humble prudence, and private economy. . . .

[Frugality] if it be not a virtue, is, at least, a quality, which can seldom exist without some virtues, and without which few virtues can exist. . . .

Let no man squander against his inclination. With this precept it may be, perhaps, imagined easy to comply; yet if those whom profusion has buried in prisons, or driven into banishment, were examined, it would be found that very few were ruined by their own choice, or purchased pleasure with the loss of their estates; but that they suffered themselves to be borne away by the violence of those with whom they conversed, and yielded reluctantly to a thousand prodigalities, either from a trivial emulation of wealth and spirit, or a mean fear of contempt and ridicule; an emulation for the prize of folly, or the dread of the laugh of fools. [57]

Those parallel circumstances and kindred images, to which we readily conform our minds, are, above all other writings, to be found in narratives of the

lives of particular persons ; and therefore no species of writing seems more worthy of cultivation than biography, since none can be more delightful or more useful, none can more certainly enchain the heart by irresistible interest, or more widely diffuse instruction to every diversity of condition.

The general and rapid narratives of history, which involve a thousand fortunes in the business of a day, and complicate innumerable incidents in one great transaction, afford few lessons applicable to private life, which derives its comforts and its wretchedness from the right or wrong management of things, which nothing but their frequency makes considerable, *Parva, si non fiunt quotidie*,¹ says Pliny, and which can have no place in those relations which never descend below the consultation of senates, the motions of armies, and the schemes of conspirators.

I have often thought that there has rarely passed a life of which a judicious and faithful narrative would not be useful. For, not only every man has, in the mighty mass of the world, great numbers in the same condition with himself, to whom his mistakes and miscarriages, escapes and expedients, would be of immediate and apparent use ; but there is such an uniformity in the state of man, considered apart from adventitious and separable decorations and disguises, that there is scarce any possibility of good or ill, but is common to human kind. A great part of the time of those who are placed at the greatest distances by fortune, or by temper, must unavoidably pass in the same manner ; and though, when the claims of nature are satisfied, caprice, and vanity, and accident, begin to produce

¹ Hanc regulam . . . Spurinna constantissime servat ; quin etiam parva haec (parva, si non quotidie fiant), ordine quodam et velut orbe circumagit.—*Epistolae*, iii. 1.

discriminations and peculiarities, yet the eye is not very heedful or quick, which cannot discover the same causes still terminating their influence in the same effects, though sometimes accelerated; sometimes retarded, or perplexed by multiplied combinations. We are all prompted by the same motives, all deceived by the same fallacies, all animated by hope, obstructed by danger, entangled by desire, and seduced by pleasure. . . .

There are many invisible circumstances which, whether we read as inquirers after natural or moral knowledge, whether we intend to enlarge our science, or increase our virtue, are more important than publick occurrences. Thus Sallust, the great master of nature, has not forgot, in his account of Catiline, to remark that *his walk was now quick, and again slow*,¹ as an indication of a mind revolving something with violent commotion. Thus the story of Melancthon affords a striking lecture on the value of time, by informing us, that when he made an appointment, he expected not only the hour, but the minute to be fixed, that the day might not run out in the idleness of suspense;² and all the plans and enterprises of De Witt are now of less importance to the world, than that part of his personal character, which represents him as *careful of his health, and negligent of his life*.³ [60]

¹ *Citus modo, modo tardus incessit.—De conj., Cat. 15.*

² What was Johnson's authority it is not easy to say, but Cox, *Life of Melancthon* (1815), records the fact.

³ 'Among other qualities which entered into the composition of this minister, the great care he had of his health, and the little of his life, were not, I think, the least considerable; since from the first he derived his great temperance, as well as his great boldness and constancy from the other.'—*An Essay on the Cure of Gout.* By Sir W. Temple, *Works*, vol. iii, p. 244, edition 1770.

Men may be made inconstant by virtue and by vice, by too much or too little thought ; yet inconstancy, however dignified by its motives, is always to be avoided, because life allows us but a small time for inquiry and experiment, and he that steadily endeavours at excellence, in whatever employment, will more benefit mankind than he that hesitates in choosing his part till he is called to the performance. The traveller that resolutely follows a rough and winding path, will sooner reach the end of his journey, than he that is always changing his direction, and wastes the hours of day-light in looking for smoother ground, and shorter passages. [63]

So many qualities are indeed requisite to the possibility of friendship, and so many accidents must concur to its rise and its continuance, that the greatest part of mankind content themselves without it, and supply its place as they can, with interest and dependence. . . .

That friendship may be at once fond and lasting, there must not only be equal virtue on each part, but virtue of the same kind ; not only the same end must be proposed, but the same means must be approved by both. We are often, by superficial accomplishments and accidental endearments, induced to love those whom we cannot esteem ; we are sometimes, by great abilities, and incontestible evidences of virtue, compelled to esteem those whom we cannot love. But friendship, compounded of esteem and love, derives from one its tenderness, and its permanence from the other ; and therefore requires not only that its candidates should gain the judgment, but that they should attract the affections ; that

they should not only be firm in the day of distress, but gay in the hour of jollity; not only useful in exigencies, but pleasing in familiar life; their presence should give cheerfulness as well as courage, and dispel alike the gloom of fear and of melancholy. . . .

It was once confessed to me, by a painter, that no professor of his art ever loved another. This declaration is so far justified by the knowledge of life, as to damp the hopes of warm and constant friendship between men whom their studies have made competitors, and whom every favourer and every censurer are hourly inciting against each other. The utmost expectation that experience can warrant, is, that they should forbear open hostilities and secret machinations, and, when the whole fraternity is attacked, be able to unite against a common foe. Some, however, though few, may perhaps be found, in whom emulation has not been able to overpower generosity, who are distinguished from lower beings by nobler motives than the love of fame, and can preserve the sacred flame of friendship from the gusts of pride, and the rubbish of interest.

Friendship is seldom lasting but between equals, or where the superiority on one side is reduced by some equivalent advantage on the other. Benefits which cannot be repaid, and obligations which cannot be discharged, are not commonly found to increase affection; they excite gratitude indeed, and heighten veneration; but commonly take away that easy freedom and familiarity of intercourse, without which, though there may be fidelity, and zeal, and admiration, there cannot be friendship. Thus imperfect are all earthly blessings; the great effect of friendship is beneficence, yet by the first act of

uncommon kindness it is endangered, like plants that bear their fruit and die. Yet this consideration ought not to restrain bounty, or repress compassion; for duty is to be preferred before convenience, and he that loses part of the pleasures of friendship by his generosity, gains in its place the gratulation of his conscience.

[64]

It is almost always the unhappiness of a victorious disputant, to destroy his own authority by claiming too many consequences, or diffusing his proposition to an indefensible extent. When we have heated our zeal in a cause, and elated our confidence with success, we are naturally inclined to pursue the same train of reasoning, to establish some collateral truth, to remove some adjacent difficulty, and to take in the whole comprehension of our system.

* * * * *

It is natural for every man uninstructed to murmur at his condition, because, in the general infelicity of life, he feels his own miseries, without knowing that they are common to all the rest of the species; and therefore, though he will not be less sensible of pain by being told that others are equally tormented, he will at least be freed from the temptation of seeking, by perpetual changes, that ease which is no where to be found; and, though his disease still continues, he escapes the hazard of exasperating it by remedies.

* * * * *

It seemed, perhaps, below the dignity of the great masters of moral learning, to descend to familiar life, and caution mankind against that petty ambition which is known among us by the name of

Vanity; which yet had been an undertaking not unworthy of the longest beard, and most solemn austerity. For though the passions of little minds, acting in low stations, do not fill the world with bloodshed and devastations, or mark, by great events, the periods of time, yet they torture the breast on which they seize, infest those that are placed within the reach of their influence, destroy private quiet and private virtue, and undermine insensibly the happiness of the world. . . .

We see women universally jealous of the reputation of their beauty, and frequently look with contempt on the care with which they study their complexions, endeavour to preserve or to supply the bloom of youth, regulate every ornament, twist their hair into curls, and shade their faces from the weather. We recommend the care of their nobler part, and tell them how little addition is made by all their arts to the graces of the mind. But when was it known that female goodness or knowledge was able to attract that officiousness, or inspire that ardour, which beauty produces whenever it appears? And with what hope can we endeavour to persuade the ladies, that the time spent at the toilet is lost in vanity, when they have every moment some new conviction, that their interest is more effectually promoted by a riband well disposed, than by the brightest act of heroick virtue? [66]

Nothing is to be estimated by its effect upon common eyes and common ears. A thousand miseries make silent and invisible inroads on mankind, and the heart feels innumerable throbs, which never break into complaint. Perhaps, likewise, our plea-

sures are for the most part equally secret, and most are borne up by some private satisfaction, some internal consciousness, some latent hope, some peculiar prospect, which they never communicate, but reserve for solitary hours, and clandestine meditation.

The main of life is, indeed, composed of small incidents and petty occurrences; of wishes for objects not remote, and grief for disappointments of no fatal consequence; of insect vexations which sting us and fly away, impertinences which buzz a while about us, and are heard no more; of meteorous pleasures which dance before us and are dissipated; of compliments which glide off the soul like other musick, and are forgotten by him that gave and him that received them.

Such is the general heap out of which every man is to cull his own condition: for, as the chemists tell us, that all bodies are resolvable into the same elements, and that the boundless variety of things arises from the different proportions of very few ingredients; so a few pains and a few pleasures are all the materials of human life, and of these the proportions are partly allotted by Providence, and partly left to the arrangement of reason and of choice.

* * * * *

To be happy at home is the ultimate result of all ambition, the end to which every enterprize and labour tends, and of which every desire prompts the prosecution. . . .

Every man must have found some whose lives, in every house but their own, were a continual series of hypocrisy, and who concealed under fair appearances bad qualities, which, whenever they thought themselves out of the reach of censure, broke out from

their restraint like winds imprisoned in their caverns, and whom every one had reason to love, but they whose love a wise man is chiefly solicitous to procure. And there are others who, without any show of general goodness, and without the attractions by which popularity is conciliated, are received among their own families as bestowers of happiness, and reverenced as instructors; guardians, and benefactors.

[68]

Piety is the only proper and adequate relief of decaying man. He that grows old without religious hopes, as he declines into imbecility, and feels pains and sorrows incessantly crowding upon him, falls into a gulph of bottomless misery, in which every reflection must plunge him deeper, and where he finds only new gradations of anguish, and precipices of horrour.¹ [69]

Among the sentiments which almost every man changes as he advances into years, is the expectation of uniformity of character. He that without acquaintance with the power of desire, the cogency of distress, the complications of affairs, or the force of partial influence, has filled his mind with the excellence of virtue, and, having never tried his resolution in any encounters with hope or fear, believes it able to stand firm whatever shall oppose it, will be always clamorous against the smallest failure, ready to exact the utmost punctualities of right, and to consider

¹ This extract is given as a partial explanation of Johnson's occasional hypochondriac melancholy.

every man that fails in any part of his duty, as without conscience and without merit; unworthy of trust or love, of pity or regard; as an enemy whom all should join to drive out of society, as a pest which all should avoid, or as a weed which all should trample.

It is not but by experience, that we are taught the possibility of retaining some virtues, and rejecting others, or of being good or bad to a particular degree. For it is very easy to the solitary reasoner to prove that the same arguments by which the mind is fortified against one crime are of equal force against all, and the consequence very naturally follows, that he whom they fail to move on any occasion, has either never considered them, or has by some fallacy taught himself to evade their validity; and that, therefore, when a man is known to be guilty of one crime, no farther evidence is needful of his depravity and corruption. . . .

Since the purest virtue is consistent with some vice, and the virtue of the greatest number with almost an equal proportion of contrary qualities, let none too hastily conclude that all goodness is lost though it may for a time be clouded and overwhelmed; for most minds are the slaves of external circumstances, and conform to any hand that undertakes to mould them, roll down any torrent of custom in which they happen to be caught, or bend to any importunity that bears hard against them.

* * * * *

Every one should consider himself as entrusted, not only with his own conduct, but with that of others; and as accountable, not only for the duties which he neglects, or the crimes that he commits, but for that negligence and irregularity which he may encourage or inculcate. Every man, in whatever station, has, or endeavours to have, his followers,

admirers, and imitators, and has therefore the influence of his example to watch with care; he ought to avoid not only crimes, but the appearance of crimes; and not only to practise virtue, but to applaud, countenance, and support it. For it is possible that for want of attention, we may teach others faults from which ourselves are free, or, by a cowardly desertion of a cause which we ourselves approve, may pervert those who fix their eyes upon us, and, having no rule of their own to guide their course, are easily misled by the aberrations of that example which they choose for their direction. [70]

Those who exalt themselves into the chair of instruction, without inquiring whether any will submit to their authority, have not sufficiently considered how much of human life passes in little incidents, cursory conversation, slight business, and casual amusements; and therefore they have endeavoured only to inculcate the more awful virtues, without condescending to regard those petty qualities, which grow important only by their frequency, and which, though they produce no single acts of heroism, nor astonish us by great events, yet are every moment exerting their influence upon us, and make the draught of life sweet or bitter by imperceptible instillations. They operate unseen and unregarded, as change of air makes us sick or healthy, though we breathe it without attention, and only know the particles that impregnate it by their salutary or malignant effects. . . .

In assemblies and places of resort, it seldom fails to happen, that though at the entrance of some particular person, every face brightens with gladness, and

every hand is extended in salutation, yet if you pursue him beyond the first exchange of civilities, you will find him of very small importance, and only welcome to the company, as one by whom all conceive themselves admired, and with whom any one is at liberty to amuse himself when he can find no other auditor or companion; as one with whom all are at ease, who will hear a jest without criticism, and a narrative without contradiction, who laughs with every wit, and yields to every disputer. . . .

It is by some unfortunate mistake that almost all those who have any claim to esteem or love, press their pretensions with too little consideration of others. This mistake, my own interest, as well as my zeal for general happiness, makes me desirous to rectify; for I have a friend, who, because he knows his own fidelity and usefulness, is never willing to sink into a companion: I have a wife whose beauty first subdued me, and whose wit confirmed her conquest, but whose beauty now serves no other purpose than to entitle her to tyranny, and whose wit is only used to justify perverseness.

Surely nothing can be more unreasonable than to lose the will to please, when we are conscious of the power, or show more cruelty than to choose any kind of influence before that of kindness. He that regards the welfare of others, should make his virtue approachable, that it may be loved and copied. [72]

Whenever the weather was cloudy, she [my aunt] would take her bed and send me notice that her time was come. I [the expectant heir] went with all the haste of eagerness, and sometimes received passionate injunctions to be kind to her maid, and directions

how the last offices should be performed; but if before my arrival the sun happened to break out, or the wind to change, I met her at the door, or found her in the garden, bustling and vigilant, with all the tokens of long life. . . .

She lived through spring and fall, and set heat and cold at defiance, till, after near half a century, I buried her on the fourteenth of last June, aged ninety-three years, five months, and six days.

For two months after her death I was rich, and was pleased with that obsequiousness and reverence which wealth instantaneously procures. But this joy is now past, and I have returned again to my old habit of wishing. Being accustomed to give the future full power over my mind, and to start away from the scene before me to some expected enjoyment, I deliver up myself to the tyranny of every desire which fancy suggests, and long for a thousand things which I am unable to procure. Money has much less power than is ascribed to it by those who want it. I had formed schemes which I cannot execute. I had supposed events which do not come to pass, and the rest of my life must pass in craving solicitude, unless you can find some remedy for a mind, corrupted with an inveterate disease of wishing, and unable to think on anything but wants, which reason tells me will never be supplied. [73]

Let no man rashly determine that his unwillingness to be pleased is a proof of understanding, unless his superiority appears from less doubtful evidence.

[74]

Scholars whom I [Melissa] have found a harmless and inoffensive order of beings, not so much wiser than ourselves, but that they may receive as well as communicate knowledge, and more inclined to degrade their own character by cowardly submission, than to overbear or oppress us with their learning or their wit. From these men, however, if they are by kind treatment encouraged to talk, something may be gained, which, embellished with elegancy, and softened by modesty, will always add dignity and value to female conversation.

* * * * *

I will . . . so far maintain my antiquated claim to politeness, as to venture the establishment of this rule, that no one ought to remind another of misfortunes of which the sufferer does not complain, and which there are no means proposed of alleviating. You have no right to excite thoughts which necessarily give pain whenever they return, and which perhaps might not have revived but by absurd and unseasonable compassion. [75]

It is easy for every man, whatever be his character with others, to find reasons for esteeming himself, and therefore censure, contempt, or conviction of crimes, seldom deprive him of his own favour. Those, indeed, who can see only external facts, may look upon him with abhorrence ; but when he calls himself to his own tribunal, he finds every fault, if not absolutely effaced, yet so much palliated by the goodness of his intention, and the cogency of the motive, that very little guilt or turpitude remains ; and when he takes a survey of the whole complication of his character, he discovers so many latent excellencies, so many virtues that want but an

opportunity to exert themselves in act, and so many kind wishes for universal happiness, that he looks on himself as suffering unjustly under the infamy of single failings, while the general temper of his mind is unknown or unregarded. [76]

The wit, the hero, the philosopher, whom their tempers or their fortunes have hindered from intimate relations, die, without any other effect than that of adding a new topic to the conversation of the day. . . .

Those who in their lives were applauded and admired, are laid at last in the ground without the common honour of a stone; because by those excellencies with which many were delighted, none had been obliged, and though they had many to celebrate, they had none to love them. [78]

To learn caution by turning our eyes upon life, and observing the arts by which negligence is surprized, timidity overborne, and credulity amused requires either great latitude of converse and long acquaintance with business, or uncommon activity of vigilance, and acuteness of penetration. When, therefore, a young man, not distinguished by vigour of intellect, comes into the world full of scruples and diffidence; makes a bargain with many provisional limitations; hesitates in his answer to a common question, lest more should be intended than he can immediately discover; has a long reach in detecting the projects of his acquaintance; considers every caress as an act of hypocrisy, and feels neither

gratitude nor affection from the tenderness of his friends, because he believes no one to have any real tenderness but for himself; whatever expectations this early sagacity may raise of his future eminence or riches, I can seldom forbear to consider him as a wretch incapable of generosity or benevolence; as a villain early completed beyond the need of common opportunities and gradual temptations.

* * * * *

The world has been long amused with the mention of policy in publick transactions, and of art in private affairs; they have been considered as the effects of great qualities, and as unattainable by men of the common level: yet I have not found many performances either of art or policy, that required such stupendous efforts of intellect, or might not have been effected by falsehood and impudence, without the assistance of any other powers. To profess what he does not mean, to promise what he cannot perform, to flatter ambition with prospects of promotion, and misery with hopes of relief, to sooth pride with appearances of submission, and appease enmity by blandishments and bribes, can surely imply nothing more or greater than a mind devoted wholly to its own purposes, a face that cannot blush, and a heart that cannot feel.

[79]

Perhaps the infirmity of human nature will scarcely suffer a man groaning under the pressure of distress, to judge rightly of the kindness of his friends, or think they have done enough till his deliverance is completed; not therefore what we might wish, but what we could demand from others, we are obliged to grant, since, though we can easily know how much

we might claim, it is impossible to determine what we should hope.

But in all inquiries concerning the practice of voluntary and occasional virtues, it is safest for minds not oppressed with superstitious fears to determine against their own inclinations, and secure themselves from deficiency, by doing more than they believe strictly necessary. For of this every man may be certain, that, if he were to exchange conditions with his dependent, he should expect more than, with the utmost exertion of his ardour, he now will prevail upon himself to perform; and when reason has no settled rule, and our passions are striving to mislead us, it is surely the part of a wise man to err on the side of safety.

[81]

It was observed, from my entrance into the world, that I had something uncommon in my disposition, and that there appeared in me very early tokens of superior genius. I was always an enemy to trifles; the playthings which my mother bestowed on me I immediately broke, that I might discover the method of their structure, and the causes of their motions: of all the toys with which children are delighted I valued only my coral, and as soon as I could speak, asked, like Pieresc, *[sic]*¹ innumerable questions which the maids about me could not resolve. As I grew older I was more thoughtful and serious and instead of amusing myself with puerile diversions, made collections of natural rarities, and never walked

¹ Peiresc, Nicolas Claude-Fabri De, 1580-1637, scholar, called by Bayle 'Le Procureur Général de la Littérature'. In the *Idler*, No. 65, Johnson says, 'the papers left in the closet of Peiresc supplied his heirs with a whole winter's fuel.'

into the fields without bringing home stones of remarkable forms, or insects of some uncommon species. . . .

Having been always a lover of geography, I determined to collect the maps drawn in the rude and barbarous times, before any regular surveys, or just observations; and have, at a great expense, brought together a volume, in which, perhaps, not a single country is laid down according to its true situation, and by which, he that desires to know the errors of the ancient geographers may be amply informed. . . .

I have suffered nothing worthy the regard of a wise man to escape my notice: I have ransacked the old and the new world, and been equally attentive to past ages and the present. For the illustration of ancient history I can show a marble, of which the inscription, though it is not now legible, appears, from some broken remains of the letters, to have been Tuscan and therefore probably engraved before the foundation of Rome. I have two pieces of porphyry found among the ruins of Ephesus, and three letters broken off by a learned traveller from the monuments of Persepolis; a piece of stone which paved the Areopagus of Athens, and a plate without figures or characters, which was found at Corinth, and which I therefore believe to be that metal which was once valued before gold. I have sand gathered out of the Granicus; a fragment of Trajan's bridge over the Danube; some of the mortar which cemented the watercourse of Tarquin; a horse-shoe broken on the Flaminian way; and a turf with five daisies dug from the field of Pharsalia.

I do not wish to raise the envy of unsuccessful collectors, by too pompous a display of my scientifick wealth, but cannot forbear to observe, that there are

few regions of the globe which are not honoured with some memorial in my cabinets. The Persian monarchs are said to have boasted the greatness of their empire, by being served at their tables with drink from the Ganges and the Danube: I can show one vial, of which the water was formerly an icicle on the crags of Caucasus, and another that contains what once was snow on the top of Atlas; in a third is dew brushed from a banana in the gardens of Ispahan; and, in another, brine that has rolled in the Pacifick ocean. I flatter myself that I am writing to a man who will rejoice at the honour which my labours have procured to my country; and therefore I shall tell you that Britain can, by my care, boast of a snail that has crawled upon the wall of China; a humming bird which an American princess wore in her ear; the tooth of an elephant who carried the queen of Siam; the skin of an ape that was kept in the palace of the great mogul; a riband that adorned one of the maids of a Turkish sultana; and a scymitar once wielded by a soldier of Abas the great.

In collecting antiquities of every country, I have been careful to choose only by intrinsick worth, and real usefulness, without regard to party or opinions. I have therefore a lock of Cromwell's hair in a box turned from a piece of the royal oak: and keep in the same drawers, sand scraped from the coffin of king Richard, and a commission signed by Henry the seventh. I have equal veneration for the ruff of Elizabeth, and the shoe of Mary of Scotland; and should lose, with like regret, a tobacco-pipe of Raleigh, and a stirrup of king James. I have paid the same price for a glove of Lewis, and a thimble of queen Mary; for a fur cap of the Czar, and a boot of Charles of Sweden.

If we consider the manner in which those who assume the office of directing the conduct of others execute their undertaking, it will not be very wonderful that their labours, however zealous or affectionate, are frequently useless. For what is the advice that is commonly given? A few general maxims, enforced with vehemence and inculcated with importunity, but failing for want of particular reference and immediate application.

It is not often that any man can have so much knowledge of another, as is necessary to make instruction useful. We are sometimes not ourselves conscious of the original motives of our actions, and when we know them, our first care is to hide them from the sight of others, and often from those most diligently, whose superiority either of power or understanding may entitle them to inspect our lives; it is therefore very probable that he who endeavours the cure of our intellectual maladies, mistakes their cause; and that his prescriptions avail nothing, because he knows not which of the passions or desires is vitiated.

* * * * *

There are minds so impatient of inferiority, that their gratitude is a species of revenge, and they return benefits, not because recompense is a pleasure, but because obligation is a pain.

[87]

The most recluse are not the most vigorous prosecutors of study. Many impose upon the world, and many upon themselves, by an appearance of severe and exemplary diligence, when they, in reality, give themselves up to the luxury of fancy, please their minds with regulating the past, or planning

it, and check it at the first discovery by proper counteraction.

The great resolution to be formed, when happiness and virtue are thus formidably invaded, is, that no part of life be spent in a state of neutrality or indifference; but that some pleasure be found for every moment that is not devoted to labour; and that, whenever the necessary business of life grows irksome or disgusting, an immediate transition be made to diversion and gaiety.

[89]

I was now in the place where every one catches the contagion of vanity, and soon began to distinguish myself by sophisms and paradoxes. I declared war against all received opinions and established rules, and levelled my batteries particularly against those universal principles which had stood unshaken in all the vicissitudes of literature, and are considered as the inviolable temples of truth, or the impregnable bulwarks of science.

I applied myself chiefly to those parts of learning which have filled the world with doubt and perplexity, and could readily produce all the arguments relating to matter and motion, time and space, identity and infinity.

I was equally able and equally willing to maintain the system of Newton or Descartes, and favoured occasionally the hypothesis of Ptolemy, or that of Copernicus. I sometimes exalted vegetables to sense, and sometimes degraded animals to mechanism.

Nor was I less inclined to weaken the credit of history, or perplex the doctrines of polity. I was always of the party which I heard the company condemn.

Among the zealots of liberty I could harangue with great copiousness upon the advantages of absolute monarchy, the secrecy of its counsels, and the expedition of its measures ; and often celebrated the blessings produced by the extinction of parties, and preclusion of debates.

Among the assertors of regal authority, I never failed to declaim with republican warmth upon the original charter of universal liberty, the corruption of courts, and the folly of voluntary submission to those whom nature has levelled with ourselves. . . .

It was at last the sport of my vanity to weaken the obligations of moral duty, and efface the distinctions of good and evil, till I had deadened the sense of conviction, and abandoned my heart to the fluctuations of uncertainty, without anchor and without compass, without satisfaction of curiosity, or peace of conscience, without principles of reason, or motives of action.

Such is the hazard of repressing the first perceptions of truth, of spreading for diversion the snares of sophistry, and engaging reason against its own determinations.

The disproportions of absurdity grow less and less visible, as we are reconciled by degrees to the deformity of a mistress ; and falsehood, by long use, is assimilated to the mind, as poison to the body.

I had soon the mortification of seeing my conversation courted only by the ignorant or wicked, by either boys who were enchanted by novelty, or wretches, who having long disobeyed virtue and reason, were now desirous of my assistance to dethrone them.

Thus alarmed, I shuddered at my own corruption, and that pride by which I had been seduced, contributed to reclaim me. I was weary of continual

irresolution, and a perpetual equipoise of the mind ; and ashamed of being the favourite of those who were scorned and shunned by the rest of mankind.

I therefore retired from all temptation to dispute, prescribed a new regimen to my understanding, and resolved, instead of rejecting all established opinions which I could not prove, to tolerate though not adopt all which I could not confute. I forbore to heat my imagination with needless controversies, to discuss questions confessedly uncertain, and refrained steadily from gratifying my vanity by the support of falsehood.

By this method I am at length recovered from my argumental delirium, and find myself in the state of one awakened from the confusion and tumult of a feverish dream. I rejoice in the new possession of evidence and reality, and step on from truth to truth with confidence and quiet.

[95]

Wisdom and virtue are by no means sufficient, without the supplemental laws of good-breeding, to secure freedom from degenerating to rudeness, or self-esteem from swelling into insolence ; a thousand incivilities may be committed, and a thousand offices neglected, without any remorse of conscience, or reproach from reason.

The true effect of genuine politeness seems to be rather ease than pleasure. The power of delighting must be conferred by nature, and cannot be delivered by precept, or obtained by imitation ; but though it be the privilege of a very small number to ravish and to charm, every man may hope by rules and caution not to give pain, and may, therefore,

by the help of good-breeding, enjoy the kindness of mankind, though he should have no claim to higher distinctions.

The universal axiom in which all complaisance is included, and from which flow all the formalities which custom has established in civilized nations, is, *That no man shall give any preference to himself.* A rule so comprehensive and certain, that, perhaps, it is not easy for the mind to image an incivility, without supposing it to be broken.

There are, indeed, in every place some particular modes of the ceremonial part of good-breeding, which, being arbitrary and accidental, can be learned only by habitude and conversation; such are the forms of salutation, the different gradations of reverence, and all the adjustments of place and precedence. These, however, may be often violated without offence, if it be sufficiently evident that neither malice nor pride contributed to the failure; but will not atone, however rigidly observed, for the tumour of insolence, or petulance of contempt.

I have, indeed, not found among any part of mankind, less real and rational complaisance, than among those who have passed their time in paying and receiving visits, in frequenting public entertainments, in studying the exact measures of ceremony, and in watching all the variations of fashionable courtesy.

They know, indeed, at what hour they may beat the door of an acquaintance, how many steps they must attend him towards the gate, and what interval should pass before his visit is returned; but seldom extend their care beyond the exterior and unessential parts of civility, nor refuse their own vanity any gratification, however expensive to the quiet of another.



I have been insulted a thousand times [by Trypherus] with a catalogue of his pictures, his jewels, and his rarities, which, though he knows the humble neatness of my habitation, he seldom fails to conclude by a declaration, that wherever he sees a house meanly furnished, he despises the owner's taste, or pities his poverty.

This, Mr. Rambler, is the practice of Trypherus, by which he is become the terrour of all who are less wealthy than himself, and has raised innumerable enemies without rivalry, and without malevolence.

Yet though all are not equally culpable with Trypherus, it is scarcely possible to find any man who does not frequently, like him, indulge his own pride by forcing others into a comparison with himself when he knows the advantage is on his side, without considering that unnecessarily to obtrude unpleasing ideas, is a species of oppression; and that it is little more criminal to deprive another of some real advantage, than to interrupt that forgetfulness of its absence which is the next happiness to actual possession.

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It has been justly observed, that discord generally operates in little things; it is inflamed to its utmost vehemence by contrariety of taste, oftener than of principles; and might therefore commonly be avoided by innocent conformity, which, if it was not at first the motive, ought always to be the consequence, of indissoluble union.

[99]

The gratification of curiosity rather frees us from uneasiness than confers pleasure ; we are more pained by ignorance than delighted by instruction.

* * * * *

There is no snare more dangerous to busy and excursive minds, than the cobwebs of petty inquisitiveness, which entangle them in trivial employments and minute studies, and detain them in a middle state, between the tediousness of total inactivity, and the fatigue of laborious efforts, enchant them at once with ease and novelty, and vitiate them with the luxury of learning. The necessity of doing something, and the fear of undertaking much, sinks the historian to a genealogist, the philosopher to a journalist of the weather, and the mathematician to a constructor of dials. [103]

‘Thou art now,’ replied the smiling power, [CURIOSITY] in the presence of JUSTICE, and of TRUTH, whom the father of gods and men has sent down to register the demands and pretensions of mankind, that the world may at last be reduced to order, and that none may complain hereafter of being doomed to tasks for which they are unqualified, of possessing faculties for which they cannot find employment, or virtues that languish unobserved for want of opportunities to exert them, of being encumbered with superfluities which they would willingly resign, or of wasting away in desires which ought to be satisfied. JUSTICE is now to examine every man’s wishes, and TRUTH is to record them ; let us approach, and observe the progress of this great transaction.’

She then moved forward, and TRUTH, who knew

her among the most faithful of her followers, beckoned her to advance, till we were placed near the seat of JUSTICE. The first who required the assistance of the office, came forward with a slow pace, and tumour of dignity, and shaking a weighty purse in his hand, demanded to be registered by TRUTH, as the MAECENAS of the present age, the chief encourager of literary merit, to whom men of learning and wit might apply in any exigence or distress with certainty of succour. JUSTICE very mildly inquired, whether he had calculated the expense of such a declaration? Whether he had been informed what number of petitioners would swarm about him? Whether he could distinguish idleness and negligence from calamity, ostentation from knowledge, or vivacity from wit? To these questions he seemed not well provided with a reply, but repeated his desire to be recorded as a patron. JUSTICE then offered to register his proposal on these conditions, that he should never suffer himself to be flattered; that he should never delay an audience when he had nothing to do; and that he should never encourage followers without intending to reward them. These terms were too hard to be accepted; for what, said he, is the end of patronage, but the pleasure of reading dedications, holding multitudes in suspense, and enjoying their hopes, their fears, and their anxiety, flattering them to assiduity, and, at last, dismissing them for impatience? JUSTICE heard his confession, and ordered his name to be posted upon the gate among cheats and robbers, and publick nuisances, which all were by that notice warned to avoid.

* * * * *

A man of a very grave and philosophick aspect, required notice to be given of his intention to set

out, a certain day, on a submarine voyage, and of his willingness to take in passengers for no more than double the price at which they might sail above water. His desire was granted, and he retired to a convenient stand, in expectation of filling his ship, and growing rich in a short time by the secrecy, safety, and expedition of the passage.

Another desired to advertise the curious, that he had, for the advancement of true knowledge, contrived an optical instrument, by which those who laid out their industry on memorials of the changes of the wind, might observe the direction of the weathercocks on the hitherside of the lunar world.

Another wished to be known as the author of an invention, by which cities or kingdoms might be made warm in winter by a single fire, a kettle and pipe. Another had a vehicle by which a man might bid defiance to floods, and continue floating in an inundation, without any inconvenience, till the waters should subside.

* * * * *

As I stood looking on this scene of confusion, TRUTH condescended to ask me, what was my business at her office? I was struck with the unexpected question, and awaked by my efforts to answer it. [105]

No place affords a more striking conviction of the vanity of human hopes, than a publick library; for who can see the wall crowded on every side by mighty volumes, the works of laborious meditation, and accurate inquiry, now scarcely known but by the catalogue, and preserved only to increase the pomp of learning, without considering how many hours have been wasted in vain endeavours, how

often imagination has anticipated the praises of futurity, how many statues have risen to the eye of vanity, how many ideal converts have elevated zeal, how often wit has exulted in the eternal infamy of his antagonists, and dogmatism has delighted in the gradual advances of his authority, the immutability of his decrees, and the perpetuity of his power? [106]

The abilities of my father and mother were not perceptibly unequal, and education had given neither much advantage over the other. They had both kept good company, rattled in chariots, glittered in playhouses, and danced at Court, and were both expert in the games that were in their time called in as auxiliaries against the intrusion of thought.

When there is such a parity between two persons associated for life, the dejection which the husband, if he be not completely stupid, must always suffer for want of superiority, sinks him to submissiveness. My mamma therefore governed the family without controul; and except that my father still retained some authority in the stables, and, now and then, after a supernumerary bottle, broke a looking-glass or china dish to prove his sovereignty, the whole course of the year was regulated by her direction, the servants received from her all their orders, and the tenants were continued or dismissed at her discretion. [109]

Repentance, however difficult to be practised, is, if it be explained without superstition, easily understood. *Repentance is the relinquishment of any practice, from the conviction that it has offended God.* . . .

Retirement from the cares and pleasures of the world has been often recommended as useful to repentance. This at least is evident, that every one retires, whenever ratiocination and recollection are required on other occasions; and surely the retrospect of life, the disentanglement of actions complicated with innumerable circumstances, and diffused in various relations, the discovery of the primary movements of the heart, and the extirpation of lusts and appetites deeply rooted and widely spread, may be allowed to demand some secession from sport and noise, and business and folly. Some suspension of common affairs, some pause of temporal pain and pleasure, is doubtless necessary to him that deliberates for eternity, who is forming the only plan in which miscarriage cannot be repaired, and examining the only question in which mistake cannot be rectified.

Austerities and mortifications are means by which the mind is invigorated and roused, by which the attractions of pleasure are interrupted, and the chains of sensuality are broken. It is observed by one of the Fathers, that *he who restrains himself in the use of things lawful, will never encroach upon things forbidden.* Abstinence, if nothing more, is, at least, a cautious retreat from the utmost verge of permission, and confers that security which cannot be reasonably hoped by him that dares always to hover over the precipice of destruction, or delights to approach the pleasures which he knows it fatal to partake. Austerity is the proper antidote to indulgence; the diseases of mind as well as body are

cured by contraries, and to contraries we should readily have recourse, if we dreaded guilt as we dread pain.

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I am afraid there is little hope of persuading the young and sprightly part of my readers, upon whom the spring naturally forces my attention, to learn, from the great process of nature, the difference between diligence and hurry, between speed and precipitation.¹

[111]

Long confinement to the same company, which perhaps similitude of taste brought first together, quickly contracts the faculties, and makes a thousand things offensive that are in themselves indifferent; a man accustomed to hear only the echo of his own sentiments, soon bars all the common avenues of delight, and has no part in the general gratifications of mankind.

In things which are not immediately subject to religious or moral consideration, it is dangerous to be too long or too rigidly in the right. Sensibility may, by an incessant attention to elegance and propriety, be quickened to a tenderness inconsistent with the condition of humanity, irritable by the

¹ Wie das Gestirn,
Ohne Hast,
Aber ohne Rast,
Drehe sich jeder

Um die eigne Last.—Goethe, *Zahme Xenien*, ii.

Engraved on a seal presented to Goethe by fifteen Englishmen on his eighty-second birthday, August 28, 1831. Carlyle's *Miscellanies*, IV, 186, edition 1842.

smallest asperity, and vulnerable by the gentlest touch. He that pleases himself too much with minute exactness, and submits to endure nothing in accommodations, attendance, or address, below the point of perfection, will, whenever he enters the crowd of life, be harassed with innumerable distresses, from which those who have not in the same manner increased their sensations find no disturbance. His exotick softness will shrink at the coarseness of vulgar felicity, like a plant transplanted to northern nurseries, from the dews and sunshine of the tropical regions. . . .

The perceptions as well as the senses may be improved to our own disquiet, and we may, by diligent cultivation of the powers of dislike, raise in time an artificial fastidiousness, which shall fill the imagination with phantoms of turpitude, show us the naked skeleton of every delight, and present us only with the pains of pleasure, and the deformities of beauty.

* * * * *

Eriphile has employed her eloquence for twenty years upon the degeneracy of servants, the nastiness of her house, the ruin of her furniture, the difficulty of preserving tapestry from the moths, and the carelessness of the sluts whom she employs in brushing it. It is her business every morning to visit all the rooms, in hopes of finding a chair without its cover, a window shut or open contrary to her orders, a spot on the hearth, or a feather on the floor, that the rest of the day may be justifiably spent in taunts of contempt, and vociferations of anger. She lives for no other purpose but to preserve the neatness of a house and gardens, and feels neither inclination to pleasure, nor aspiration after virtue, while she is engrossed by the great employment of keeping gravel

from grass, and wainscot from dust. Of three amiable nieces she has declared herself an irreconcileable enemy to one, because she broke off a tulip with her hoop ; to another, because she spilt her coffee on a Turkey carpet ; and to the third, because she let a wet dog run into the parlour. She has broken off her intercourse of visits, because company makes a house dirty ; and resolves to confine herself more to her own affairs, and to live no longer in mire by foolish lenity.

* * * * *

The province of prudence lies between the greatest things and the least ; some surpass our power by their magnitude, and some escape our notice by their number and their frequency. But the indispensable business of life will afford sufficient exercise to every understanding ; and such is the limitation of the human powers, that by attention to trifles we must let things of importance pass unobserved : when we examine a mite with a glass, we see nothing but a mite.

[112]

1 ————— Audi.

Nulla unquam de morte hominis cunctatio longa est. — JUV.²

— When man's life is in debate,
The judge can ne'er too long deliberate. — DRYDEN.

Power and superiority are so flattering and delightful, that, fraught with temptation and exposed to danger as they are, scarcely any virtue is so cautious,

¹ This number of the *Rambler* is given at full length in order to show Johnson's anticipation of Romilly and Peel. Half a century later, two hundred crimes, including stealing from bleaching grounds, were punishable with death. It was not till 1808 that capital punishment was abolished in cases of private stealing from the person.

² *Satira* vi, ll. 220-1.

or any prudence so timorous, as to decline them. Even those that have most reverence for the laws of right, are pleased with showing that not fear, but choice, regulates their behaviour; and would be thought to comply, rather than obey. We love to overlook the boundaries which we do not wish to pass; and, as the Roman satirist remarks,¹ he that has no design to take the life of another, is yet glad to have it in his hands.

From the same principle, tending yet more to degeneracy and corruption, proceeds the desire of investing lawful authority with terroir, and governing by force rather than persuasion. Pride is unwilling to believe the necessity of assigning any other reason than her own will; and would rather maintain the most equitable claims by violence and penalties, than descend from the dignity of command to dispute and expostulation.

It may, I think, be suspected, that this political arrogance has sometimes found its way into legislative assemblies, and mingled with deliberations upon property and life. A slight perusal of the laws by which the measures of vindictive and coercive justice are established, will discover so many disproportions between crimes and punishments, such capricious distinctions of guilt, and such confusion of remissness and severity, as can scarcely be believed to have been produced by publick wisdom, sincerely and calmly studious of publick happiness.

The learned, the judicious, the pious Boerhaave² relates, that he never saw a criminal dragged to execution without asking himself, ‘Who knows

¹ ————— et qui nolunt occidere quemquam
Posse volunt.—Juvenal, *Satira x*, ll. 96-7.

² *Life* of Boerhaave. Johnson’s *Works*, p. 39, vol. xii, ed. 1792.

whether this man is not less culpable than me?' On the days when the prisons of this city are emptied into the grave, let every spectator of the dreadful procession put the same question to his own heart. Few among those who crowd in thousands to the legal massacre, and look with carelessness, perhaps with triumph, on the utmost exacerbations of human misery, would then be able to return without horror and dejection. For, who can congratulate himself upon a life passed without some act more mischievous to the peace or prosperity of others, than the theft of a piece of money?

It has been always the practice, when any particular species of robbery becomes prevalent and common, to endeavour its suppression by capital denunciations. Thus, one generation of malefactors is commonly cut off, and their successors are frightened into new expedients; the art of thievery is augmented with greater variety of fraud, and subtilized to higher degrees of dexterity, and more occult methods of conveyance. The law then renews the pursuit in the heat of anger, and overtakes the offender again with death. By this practice, capital inflictions are multiplied, and crimes, very different in their degrees of enormity, are equally subjected to the severest punishment that man has the power of exercising upon man.

The lawgiver is undoubtedly allowed to estimate the malignity of an offence, not merely by the loss or pain which single acts may produce, but by the general alarm and anxiety arising from the fear of mischief, and insecurity of possession: he therefore exercises the right which societies are supposed to have over the lives of those that compose them, not simply to punish a transgression, but to maintain order, and preserve quiet; he enforces those laws

with severity that are most in danger of violation, as the commander of a garrison doubles the guard on that side which is threatened by the enemy.

This method has long been tried, but tried with so little success, that rapine and violence are hourly increasing, yet few seem willing to despair of its efficacy, and of those who employ their speculations upon the present corruption of the people, some propose the introduction of more horrid, lingering, and terrific punishments; some are inclined to accelerate the executions; some to discourage pardons; and all seem to think that lenity has given confidence to wickedness, and that we can only be rescued from the talons of robbery by inflexible rigour, and sanguinary justice.

Yet since the right of setting an uncertain and arbitrary value upon life has been disputed, and since experience of past times gives us little reason to hope that any reformation will be effected by a periodical havoc of our fellow-beings, perhaps it will not be useless to consider what consequences might arise from relaxations of the law, and a more rational and equitable adaptation of penalties to offences.

Death is, as one of the ancients observes, *τὸ τῶν φοβερῶν φοβερώτατον*, of *dreadful things the most dreadful*; an evil, beyond which nothing can be threatened by sublunary power, or feared from human enmity or vengeance. This terror should, therefore, be reserved as the last resort of authority, as the strongest and most operative of prohibitory sanctions, and placed before the treasure of life, to guard from invasion what cannot be restored. To equal robbery with murder is to reduce murder to robbery, to confound in common minds the gradations of iniquity, and incite the commission of a greater

crime to prevent the detection of a less. If only murder were punished with death, very few robbers would stain their hands with blood ; but when, by the last act of cruelty, no new danger is incurred, and greater security may be obtained, upon what principle shall we bid them forbear ?

It may be urged, that the sentence is often mitigated to simple robbery ; but surely this is to confess that our laws are unreasonable in our own opinion ; and, indeed, it may be observed, that all but murderers have, at their last hour, the common sensations of mankind pleading in their favour.

From this conviction of the inequality of the punishment to the offence, proceeds the frequent solicitation of pardons. They who would rejoice at the correction of a thief, are yet shocked at the thought of destroying him. His crime shrinks to nothing, compared to his misery ; and severity defeats itself by exciting pity.

The gibbet, indeed, certainly disables those who die upon it from infesting the community ; but their death seems not to contribute more to the reformation of their associates, than any other method of separation. A thief seldom passes much of his time in recollection or anticipation, but from robbery hastens to riot, and from riot to robbery ; nor, when the grave closes upon his companion, has any other care than to find another.

The frequency of capital punishments, therefore, rarely hinders the commission of a crime, but naturally and commonly prevents its detection, and is, if we proceed only upon prudential principles, chiefly for that reason to be avoided. Whatever may be urged by casuists or politicians, the greater part of mankind, as they can never think that to pick the pocket and to pierce the heart is equally criminal,

will scarcely believe that two malefactors so different in guilt can be justly doomed to the same punishment; nor is the necessity of submitting the conscience to human laws so plainly evinced, so clearly stated, or so generally allowed, but that the pious, the tender, and the just, will always scruple to concur with the community in an act which their private judgment cannot approve.

He who knows not how often rigorous laws produce total impunity, and how many crimes are concealed and forgotten for fear of hurrying the offender to that state in which there is no repentance, has conversed very little with mankind. And whatever epithets of reproach or contempt this compassion may incur from those who confound cruelty with firmness, I know not whether any wise man would wish it less powerful, or less extensive.

If those whom the wisdom of our laws has condemned to die, had been detected in their rudiments of robbery, they might, by proper discipline and useful labour, have been disentangled from their habits, they might have escaped all the temptations to subsequent crimes, and passed their days in reparation and penitence, and detected they might all have been, had the prosecutors been certain that their lives would have been spared. I believe, every thief will confess, that he has been more than once seized and dismissed; and that he has sometimes ventured upon capital crimes, because he knew, that those whom he injured would rather connive at his escape, than cloud their minds with the horrors of his death.

All laws against wickedness are ineffectual, unless some will inform, and some will prosecute; but till we mitigate the penalties for mere violations of property, information will always be hated, and

prosecution dreaded. The heart of a good man cannot but recoil at the thought of punishing a slight injury with death; especially when he remembers, that the thief might have procured safety by another crime, from which he was restrained only by his remaining virtue.

The obligations to assist the exercise of publick justice are indeed strong; but they will certainly be overpowered by tenderness for life. What is punished with severity contrary to our ideas of adequate retribution, will be seldom discovered; and multitudes will be suffered to advance from crime to crime, till they deserve death, because, if they had been sooner prosecuted, they would have suffered death before they deserved it.

This scheme of invigorating the laws by relaxation, and extirpating wickedness by lenity, is so remote from common practice, that I might reasonably fear to expose it to the publick, could it be supported only by my own observations: I shall, therefore, by ascribing it to its author, Sir Thomas More¹, endeavour to procure it that attention which I wish always paid to prudence, to justice, and to mercy.

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[WHY LITERARY PEOPLE LIVE IN GARRETS]

The effects of the air in the production or cure of corporeal maladies have been acknowledged from the time of Hippocrates; but no man has yet sufficiently considered how far it may influence the operations of the genius, though every day affords instances of local understanding, of wits and reasoners, whose faculties are adapted to some single spot, and who,

¹ *Utopia*, Book i.

when they are removed to any other place, sink at once into silence and stupidity. I have discovered, by a long series of observations, that invention and elocution suffer great impediment from dense and impure vapours, and that the tenuity of a defecated air at a proper distance from the surface of the earth, accelerates the fancy, and sets at liberty those intellectual powers which were before shackled by too strong attraction, and unable to expand themselves under the pressure of a gross atmosphere. I have found dulness to quicken into sentiment in a thin ether, as water, though not very hot, boils in a receiver partly exhausted ; and heads, in appearance empty, have teemed with notions upon rising ground, as the flaccid sides of a football would have swelled out into stiffness and extension.

For this reason I never think myself qualified to judge decisively of any man's faculties, whom I have only known in one degree of elevation ; but take some opportunity of attending him from the cellar to the garret, and try upon him all the various degrees of rarefaction and condensation, tension and laxity. If he is neither vivacious aloft, nor serious below, I then consider him as hopeless ; but as it seldom happens that I do not find the temper to which the texture of his brain is fitted, I accommodate him in time with a tube of mercury, first marking the points most favourable to his intellects, according to rules which I have long studied, and which I may, perhaps, reveal to mankind in a complete treatise of barometrical pneumatology.

Another cause of the gaiety and sprightliness of the dwellers in garrets is probably the increase of that vertiginous motion, with which we are carried round by the diurnal revolution of the earth. The power of agitation upon the spirits is well known ; every

man has felt his heart lightened in a rapid vehicle, or on a galloping horse; and nothing is plainer than that he who towers to the fifth story, is whirled through more space by every circumrotation, than another that grovels upon the groundfloor. The nations between the tropicks are known to be fiery, inconstant, inventive, and fanciful; because, living at the utmost length of the earth's diameter, they are carried about with more swiftness than those whom nature has placed nearer to the poles; and therefore, as it becomes a wise man to struggle with the inconveniencies of his country, whenever celerity and acuteness are requisite, we must actuate our languor by taking a few turns round the centre in a garret.

If you imagine that I ascribe to air and motion effects which they cannot produce, I desire you to consult your own memory, and consider whether you have never known a man acquire reputation in his garret, which, when fortune or a patron had placed him upon the first floor, he was unable to maintain; and who never recovered his former vigour of understanding, till he was restored to his original situation. That a garret will make every man a wit, I am very far from supposing; I know there are some who would continue blockheads even on the summit of the Andes, or on the peak of Teneriffe. But let not any man be considered as unimproveable till this potent remedy has been tried; for perhaps he was formed to be great only in a garret, as the joiner of Aretaeus was rational in no other place but in his own shop.¹

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¹ ‘A certain joiner was a skilful artisan while in the house, would measure, plane, mortise, and adjust wood, and finish the work of the house correctly; would associate with the work-

It is one of the maxims of the civil law, that *definitions are hazardous*. Things modified by human understandings, subject to varieties of complication, and changeable as experience advances knowledge, or accident influences caprice, are scarcely to be included in any standing form of expression, because they are always suffering some alteration of their state. Definition is, indeed, not the province of man; every thing is set above or below our faculties. The works and operations of nature are too great in their extent, or too much diffused in their relations, and the performances of art too inconstant and uncertain, to be reduced to any determinate idea. It is impossible to impress upon our minds an adequate and just representation of an object so great, that we can never take it into our view, or so mutable, that it is always changing under our eye, and has already lost its form while we are labouring to conceive it.

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There is one species of terror which those who are unwilling to suffer the reproach of cowardice have wisely dignified with the name of *antipathy*. A man who talks with intrepidity of the monsters

men, make a bargain with them, and remunerate their work with suitable pay. While on the spot where the work was performed, he thus possessed his understanding. But if at any time he went away to the market, the bath, or any other engagement, having laid down his tools, he would first groan, then shrug his shoulders as he went out. But when he had got out of sight of the domestics, or of the work and the place where it was performed, he became completely mad; yet if he returned speedily he recovered his reason again, such a bond of connexion was there between the locality and his understanding.'—Aretaeus, *Of Chronic Diseases*, Book i, chap. 6. Translated by Adams and published for the Sydenham Society.

of the wilderness while they are out of sight, will readily confess his *antipathy* to a mole, a weasel, or a frog. He has indeed no dread of harm from an insect or a worm, but his *antipathy* turns him pale whenever they approach him. He believes that a boat will transport him with as much safety as his neighbours, but he cannot conquer his *antipathy* to the water. Thus he goes on without any reproach from his own reflections, and every day multiplies *antipathies*, till he becomes contemptible to others, and burdensome to himself.

It is indeed certain, that impressions of dread may sometimes be unluckily made by objects not in themselves justly formidable; but when fear is discovered to be groundless, it is to be eradicated like other false opinions, and *antipathies* are generally superable by a single effort. He that has been taught to shudder at a mouse, if he can persuade himself to risk one encounter, will find his own superiority, and exchange his terrors for the pride of conquest.

* * * * *

SIR,—Your great predecessor, the *SPECTATOR*, endeavoured to diffuse among his female readers a desire of knowledge; nor can I charge you, though you do not seem equally attentive to the ladies, with endeavouring to discourage them from any laudable pursuit. But, however either he or you may excite our curiosity, you have not yet informed us how it may be gratified. The world seems to have formed an universal conspiracy against our understandings; our questions are supposed not to expect answers, our arguments are confuted with a jest, and we are treated like beings who transgress the limits of our nature whenever we aspire to seriousness or improvement.

I inquired yesterday of a gentleman eminent for astronomical skill, what made the day long in sum-

mer, and short in winter ; and was told that nature protracted the days in summer, lest ladies should want time to walk in the park ; and the nights in winter, lest they should not have hours sufficient to spend at the card-table.

I hope you do not doubt but I heard such information with just contempt, and I desire you to discover to this great master of ridicule, that I was far from wanting any intelligence which he could have given me. I asked the question with no other intention than to set him free from the necessity of silence, and gave him an opportunity of mingling on equal terms with a polite assembly, from which, however uneasy, he could not then escape, by a kind introduction of the only subject on which I believed him able to speak with propriety.

I am, &c.,

GENEROSA. [126]

He that never extends his view beyond the praises or rewards of men, will be dejected by neglect and envy, or infatuated by honours and applause. But the consideration that life is only deposited in his hands to be employed in obedience to a Master who will regard his endeavours, not his success, would have preserved him from triyial elations and discouragements, and enabled him to proceed with constancy and cheerfulness, neither enervated by commendation, nor intimidated by censure. [127]

It can, indeed, raise no wonder that temerity has been generally censured ; for it is one of the vices with which few can be charged, and which therefore

great numbers are ready to condemn. It is the vice of noble and generous minds, the exuberance of magnanimity, and the ebullition of genius; and is therefore not regarded with much tenderness, because it never flatters us by that appearance of softness and imbecility which is commonly necessary to conciliate compassion. But if the same attention had been applied to the search of arguments against the folly of presupposing impossibilities and anticipating frustration, I know not whether many would not have been roused to usefulness, who, having been taught to confound prudence with temerity, never ventured to excel, lest they should unfortunately fail.

It is necessary to distinguish our own interest from that of others, and that distinction will perhaps assist us in fixing the just limits of caution and adventurousness. In an undertaking that involves the happiness or the safety of many, we have certainly no right to hazard more than is allowed by those who partake the danger; but where only ourselves can suffer by miscarriage, we are not confined within such narrow limits; and still less is the reproach of temerity, when numbers will receive advantage by success, and only one be incommoded by failure.

Men are generally willing to hear precepts by which ease is favoured; and as no resentment is raised by general representations of human folly, even in those who are most eminently jealous of comparative reputation, we confess, without reluctance, that vain man is ignorant of his own weakness, and therefore frequently presumes to attempt what he can never accomplish; but it ought likewise to be remembered, that man is no less ignorant of his own powers, and might perhaps have accomplished

a thousand designs, which the prejudices of cowardice restrained him from attempting. . . .

Everyone should . . . endeavour to invigorate himself by reason and reflection, and determine to exert the latent force that nature may have reposed in him, before the hour of exigence comes upon him, and compulsion shall torture him to diligence. It is below the dignity of a reasonable being to owe that strength to necessity which ought always to act at the call of choice, or to need any other motive to industry than the desire of performing his duty. [129]

The folly of allowing ourselves to delay what we know cannot be finally escaped, is one of the general weaknesses, which, in spite of the instruction of moralists, and the remonstrances of reason, prevail to a greater or less degree in every mind; even they who most steadily withstand it, find it, if not the most violent, the most pertinacious of their passions, always renewing its attacks, and, though often vanquished, never destroyed. . . .

Life is languished away in the gloom of anxiety, and consumed in collecting resolutions which the next morning dissipates; in forming purposes which we scarcely hope to keep, and reconciling ourselves to our own cowardice by excuses, which, while we admit them, we know to be absurd. Our firmness is, by the continual contemplation of misery, hourly impaired; every submission to our fear enlarges its dominion; we not only waste that time in which the evil we dread might have been suffered and surmounted, but even where procrastination produces no absolute increase of our difficulties, make them less superable to ourselves by habitual terrors. When evils cannot

be avoided, it is wise to contract the interval of expectation ; to meet the mischiefs which will overtake us if we fly ; and suffer only their real malignity, without the conflicts of doubt, and anguish of anticipation. . . .

Fear, whether natural or acquired, when once it has full possession of the fancy, never fails to employ it upon visions of calamity, such as, if they are not dissipated by useful employment, will soon overcast it with horrors, and embitter life not only with those miseries by which all earthly beings are really more or less tormented, but with those which do not yet exist, and which can only be discerned by the perspicacity of cowardice.

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If in any case the shackles of prescription could be wholly shaken off, and the imagination left to act without controul, on what occasion should it be expected, but in the selection of lawful pleasure ? Pleasure, of which the essence is choice ; which compulsion dissociates from every thing to which nature has united it ; and which owes not only its vigour but its being to the smiles of liberty. Yet we see that the senses, as well as the reason, are regulated by credulity ; and that most will feel, or say that they feel, the gratifications which others have taught them to expect.

* * * * *

Even these easy pleasures [Freshness of air, verdure of the woods, &c.] are missed by the greater part of those who waste their summer in the country. Should any man pursue his acquaintances to their retreats, he would find few of them listening to Philomel, loitering in woods, or plucking daisies, catching the

healthy gale of the morning, or watching the gentle coruscations of declining day. Some will be discovered at a window by the road side, rejoicing when a new cloud of dust gathers towards them, as at the approach of a momentary supply of conversation, and a short relief from the tediousness of unideal vacancy. Others are placed in the adjacent villages, where they look only upon houses as in the rest of the year, with no change of objects but what a remove to any new street in London might have given them. The same set of acquaintances still settle together, and the form of life is not otherwise diversified than by doing the same things in a different place. They pay and receive visits in the usual form, they frequent the walks in the morning, they deal cards at night, they attend to the same tattle, and dance with the same partners; nor can they, at their return to their former habitation, congratulate themselves on any other advantage, than that they have passed their time like others of the same rank; and have the same right to talk of the happiness and beauty of the country, of happiness which they never felt, and beauty which they never regarded.

To be able to procure its own entertainments, and to subsist upon its own stock, is not the prerogative of every mind. There are indeed understandings so fertile and comprehensive, that they can always feed reflection with new supplies, and suffer nothing from the preclusion of adventitious amusements; as some cities have within their own walls enclosed ground enough to feed their inhabitants in a siege. But others live only from day to day, and must be constantly enabled, by foreign supplies, to keep out the encroachments of languor and stupidity. Such could not indeed be blamed for hovering within

reach of their usual pleasure, more than any other animal for not quitting its native element, were not their faculties contracted by their own fault. But let not those who go into the country, merely because they dare not be left alone at home, boast their love of nature, or their qualifications for solitude ; nor pretend that they receive instantaneous infusions of wisdom from the Dryads, and are able, when they leave smoke and noise behind, to act, or think, or reason for themselves.

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The man who considers himself as constituted the ultimate judge of disputable characters, and entrusted with the distribution of the last terrestrial rewards of merit, ought to summon all his fortitude to the support of his integrity, and resolve to discharge an office of such dignity with the most vigilant caution and scrupulous justice. To deliver examples to posterity, and to regulate the opinion of future times, is no slight or trivial undertaking ; nor is it easy to commit more atrocious treason against the great republick of humanity, than by falsifying its records and misguiding its decrees.

To scatter praise or blame without regard to justice, is to destroy the distinction of good and evil. Many have no other test of actions than general opinion ; and all are so far influenced by a sense of reputation, that they are often restrained by fear of reproach, and excited by hope of honour, when other principles have lost their power ; nor can any species of prostitution promote general depravity more than that which destroys the force of praise, by showing that it may be acquired without deserving it, and which, by setting free the active and ambitious from

the dread of infamy, lets loose the rapacity of power, and weakens the only authority by which greatness is controlled.

Praise, like gold or diamonds, owes its value only to its scarcity. It becomes cheap as it becomes vulgar, and will no longer raise expectation, or animate enterprize. It is therefore not only necessary, that wickedness, even when it is not safe to censure it, be denied applause, but that goodness be commended only in proportion to its degree; and that the garlands due to the great benefactors of mankind, be not suffered to fade upon the brow of him who can boast only petty services and easy virtues. . . .

Every other kind of adulteration, however shameful, however mischievous, is less detestable than the crime of counterfeiting characters, and fixing the stamp of literary sanction upon the dross and refuse of the world.

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He that can only be useful on great occasions, may die without exerting his abilities, and stand a helpless spectator of a thousand vexations which fret away happiness, and which nothing is required to remove but a little dexterity of conduct and readiness of expedients.

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Consider, Mr. Rambler, and compassionate the condition of a man who has taught every company to expect from him a continual feast of laughter, an unintermittent stream of jocularity. The task of every other slave has an end. The rower in time reaches the port; the lexicographer at last finds the

conclusion of his alphabet ; only the hapless wit has his labour always to begin, the call for novelty is never satisfied, and one jest only raises expectation of another. . . .

Think on the misery of him who is condemned to cultivate barrenness and ransack vacuity ; who is obliged to continue his talk when his meaning is spent, to raise merriment without images, to harass his imagination in quest of thoughts which he cannot start, and his memory in pursuit of narratives which he cannot overtake ; observe the effort with which he strains to conceal despondency by a smile, and the distress in which he sits while the eyes of the company are fixed upon him as the last refuge from silence and dejection.

It were endless to recount the shifts to which I have been reduced, or to enumerate the different species of artificial wit. I regularly frequented coffee-houses, and have often lived a week upon an expression, of which he who dropped it did not know the value. When fortune did not favour my erratik industry, I gleaned jests at home from obsolete farces. To collect wit was indeed safe, for I consorted with none that looked much into books, but to disperse it was the difficulty. A seeming negligence was often useful, and I have very successfully made a reply not to what the lady had said, but to what it was convenient for me to hear ; for very few were so perverse as to rectify a mistake which had given occasion to a burst of merriment. Sometimes I drew the conversation up by degrees to a proper point, and produced a conceit which I had treasured up, like sportsmen who boast of killing the foxes which they lodge in the covert.

The most pernicious enemy is the man of Moderation. Without interest in the question, or any motive but honest curiosity, this impartial and zealous inquirer after truth is ready to hear either side, and always disposed to kind interpretations and favourable opinions. He hath heard the trader's affairs reported with great variation, and, after a diligent comparison of the evidence, concludes it probable that the splendid superstructure of business, being originally built upon a narrow basis, has lately been found to totter; but between dilatory payment and bankruptcy there is a great distance; many merchants have supported themselves by expedients for a time, without any final injury to their creditors; and what is lost by one adventure may be recovered by another. He believes that a young lady pleased with admiration and desirous to make perfect what is already excellent, may heighten her charms by artificial improvements, but surely most of her beauties must be genuine, and who can say that he is wholly what he endeavours to appear? The author he knows to be a man of diligence, who perhaps does not sparkle with the fire of Homer, but has the judgment to discover his own deficiencies, and to supply them by the help of others; and, in his opinion, modesty is a quality so amiable and rare, that it ought to find a patron wherever it appears, and may justly be preferred by the publick suffrage to petulant wit and ostentatious literature.

He who thus discovers failings with unwillingness, and extenuates the faults which cannot be denied, puts an end at once to doubt or vindication; his hearers repose upon his candour and veracity, and admit the charge without allowing the excuse.

Such are the arts¹ by which the envious, the idle,

¹ The other arts are those of the *Roarer* and the *Whisperer*.

the peevish, and the thoughtless, obstruct that worth which they cannot equal, and, by artifices thus easy, sordid, and detestable, is industry defeated, beauty blasted, and genius depressed.

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The authors of London were formerly computed by Swift at several thousands,¹ and there is not any reason for suspecting that their number has decreased. Of these only a very few can be said to produce, or endeavour to produce, new ideas, to extend any principle of science, or gratify the imagination with any uncommon train of images or contexture of events ; the rest, however laborious, however arrogant, can only be considered as the drudges of the pen, the manufacturers of literature, who have set up for authors, either with or without a regular initiation, and, like other artificers, have no other care than to deliver their tale of wares at the stated time.

It has been formerly imagined, that he who intends the entertainment or instruction of others, must feel in himself some peculiar impulse of genius ; that he must watch the happy minute in which his natural fire is excited, in which his mind is elevated with nobler sentiments, enlightened with clearer views, and invigorated with stronger comprehension ; that he must carefully select his thoughts and polish his expressions ; and animate his efforts with the

¹ Forty thousand 'incurable scribblers' from Great Britain are set down for admittance into the Hospital provided in *A Serious and Useful Scheme to make an Hospital for Incurables*. 'If we had not great encouragement to hope,' says Swift, 'that many of that class would properly be admitted among the incurable fools [a separate heading], I should strenuously intercede to have ten or twenty thousand more added. I cannot find a computation of the scribblers in London alone.'

hope of raising a monument of learning, which neither time nor envy shall be able to destroy.

But the authors whom I am now endeavouring to recommend have been too long *hackneyed in the ways of men* to indulge the chimerical ambition of immortality; they have seldom any claim to the trade of writing, but that they have tried some other without success; they perceive no particular summons to composition, except the sound of the clock; they have no other rule than the law or the fashion for admitting their thoughts or rejecting them; and about the opinion of posterity they have little solicitude, for their productions are seldom intended to remain in the world longer than a week.

That such authors are not to be rewarded with praise is evident, since nothing can be admired when it ceases to exist; but surely, though they cannot aspire to honour, they may be exempted from ignominy, and adopted in that order of men which deserves our kindness, though not our reverence. These papers of the day, the *Ephemeræ* of learning, have uses more adequate to the purposes of common life than more pompous and durable volumes. If it is necessary for every man to be more acquainted with his contemporaries than with past generations, and to rather know the events which may immediately affect his fortune or quiet, than the revolutions of ancient kingdoms, in which he has neither possessions nor expectations; if it be pleasing to hear of the preferment and dismission of statesmen, the birth of heirs, and the marriage of beauties, the humble author of journals and gazettes must be considered as a liberal dispenser of beneficial knowledge.

Even the abridger, compiler, and translator, though their labours cannot be ranked with those of the diurnal historiographer, yet must not be rashly

doomed to annihilation. Every size of readers requires a genius of correspondent capacity; some delight in abstracts and epitomes, because they want room in their memory for long details, and content themselves with effects, without inquiry after causes; some minds are overpowered by splendour of sentiment, as some eyes are offended by a glaring light; such will gladly contemplate an author in an humble imitation as we look without pain upon the sun in the water.

As every writer has his use, every writer ought to have his patrons; and since no man, however high he may now stand, can be certain that he shall not be soon thrown down from his elevation by criticism or caprice, the common interest of learning requires that her sons should cease from intestine hostilities, and, instead of sacrificing each other to malice and contempt, endeavour to avert persecution from the meanest of their fraternity.

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It seems not to be sufficiently considered how little renown can be admitted in the world. Mankind are kept perpetually busy by their fears or desires, and have not more leisure from their own affairs, than to acquaint themselves with the accidents of the current day. Engaged in contriving some refuge from calamity, or in shortening the way to some new possession, they seldom suffer their thoughts to wander to the past or future; none but a few solitary students have leisure to inquire into the claims of ancient heroes or sages; and names which hoped to range over kingdoms and continents, shrink at last into cloisters or colleges.

Nor is it certain, that even of these dark and narrow habitations, these last retreats of fame, the

possession will be long kept. Of men devoted to literature, very few extend their views beyond some particular science, and the greater part seldom inquire, even in their own profession, for any authors but those whom the present mode of study happens to force upon their notice; they desire not to fill their minds with unfashionable knowledge, but contentedly resign to oblivion those books which they now find censured or neglected.

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I remarked with what justice of distribution he divided his talk to a wide circle; with what address he offered to every man an occasion of indulging some favourite topick, or displaying some particular attainment; the judgment with which he regulated his inquiries after the absent; and the care with which he showed all the companions of his early years how strongly they were infixed in his memory, by the mention of past incidents, and the recital of puerile kindnesses, dangers, and frolics. I soon discovered that he possessed some science of graciousness and attraction which books had not taught, and of which neither I nor my father had any knowledge; that he had the power of obliging those whom he did not benefit; that he diffused, upon his cursory behaviour and most trifling actions, a gloss of softness and delicacy by which every one was dazzled; and that, by some occult method of captivation, he animated the timorous, softened the supercilious, and opened the reserved. I could not but repine at the inelegance of my own manners, which left me no hopes but not to offend, and at the inefficacy of rustick benevolence, which gained no friends but by real service.

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That he delights in the misery of others, no man will confess, and yet what other motive can make a father cruel? The king may be instigated by one man to the destruction of another; he may sometimes think himself endangered by the virtues of a subject; he may dread the successful general or the popular orator; his avarice may point out golden confiscations; and his guilt may whisper that he can only be secure by cutting off all power of revenge.

But what can a parent hope from the oppression of those who were born to his protection, of those who can disturb him with no competition, who can enrich him with no spoils? Why cowards are cruel may be easily discovered; but for what reason, not more infamous than cowardice, can that man delight in oppression who has nothing to fear?

The unjustifiable severity of a parent is loaded with this aggravation, that those whom he injures are always in his sight. The injustice of a prince is often exercised upon those of whom he never had any personal or particular knowledge; and the sentence which he pronounces, whether of banishment, imprisonment, or death, removes from his view the man whom he condemns. But the domestic oppressor dooms himself to gaze upon those faces which he clouds with terror and with sorrow; and beholds every moment the effects of his own barbarities. He that can bear to give continual pain to those who surround him, and can walk with satisfaction in the gloom of his own presence; he that can see submissive misery without relenting, and meet without emotion the eye that implores mercy or demands justice, will scarcely be amended by remonstrance or admonition; he has found means of stopping the avenues of tenderness, and arming his heart against the force of reason.

Even though no consideration should be paid to the great law of social beings, by which every individual is commanded to consult the happiness of others, yet the harsh parent is less to be vindicated than any other criminal, because he less provides for the happiness of himself. Every man, however little he loves others, would willingly be loved; every man hopes to live long, and therefore hopes for that time at which he shall sink back to imbecility, and must depend for ease and cheerfulness upon the officiousness of others. But how has he obviated the inconveniences of old age, who alienates from him the assistance of his children, and whose bed must be surrounded in the last hours, in the hours of languor and dejection, of impatience and of pain, by strangers to whom his life is indifferent, or by enemies to whom his death is desirable?

Piety will indeed in good minds overcome provocation, and those who have been harassed by brutality will forget the injuries which they have suffered, so far as to perform the last duties with alacrity and zeal. But surely no resentment can be equally painful with kindness thus undeserved, nor can severer punishment be imprecated upon a man not wholly lost in meanness and stupidity, than, through the tediousness of decrepitude, to be reproached by the kindness of his own children, to receive not the tribute but the alms of attendance, and owe every relief of his miseries, not to gratitude but to mercy.

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I have in this view of life considered men as actuated only by natural desires, and yielding to their own inclinations, without regard to superior principles, by which the force of external agents

may be counteracted, and the temporary prevalence of passions restrained. Nature will indeed always operate, human desires will be always ranging ; but these motions, though very powerful, are not resistless ; nature may be regulated, and desires governed ; and, to contend with the predominance of successive passions, to be endangered first by one affection, and then by another, is the condition upon which we are to pass our time, the time of our preparation for that state which shall put an end to experiment, to disappointment, and to change. [151]

The wits of these happy days have discovered a way to fame, which the dull caution of our laborious ancestors durst never attempt ; they cut the knots of sophistry which it was formerly the business of years to untie, solve difficulties by sudden irradiations of intelligence, and comprehend long processes of argument by immediate intuition. [154]

Self-love is often rather arrogant than blind ; it does not hide our faults from ourselves, but persuades us that they escape the notice of others, and disposes us to resent censures lest we should confess them to be just. We are secretly conscious of defects and vices which we hope to conceal from the publick eye, and please ourselves with innumerable impostures, by which, in reality, nobody is deceived.

* * * * *

Flattery, if its operation be nearly examined, will be found to owe its acceptance, not to our ignorance but knowledge of our failures, and to delight us

rather as it consoles our wants than displays our possessions. . . .

Just praise is only a debt, but flattery is a present. The acknowledgment of those virtues on which conscience congratulates us, is a tribute that we can at any time exact with confidence; but the celebration of those which we only feign, or desire without any vigorous endeavours to attain them, is received as a confession of sovereignty over regions never conquered, as a favourable decision of disputable claims, and is more welcome as it is more gratuitous.

* * * * *

The influence of custom is indeed such, that to conquer it will require the utmost efforts of fortitude and virtue; nor can I think any men more worthy of veneration and renown, than those who have burst the shackles of habitual vice. This victory, however, has different degrees of glory as of difficulty; it is more heroick as the objects of guilty gratification are more familiar, and the recurrence of solicitation more frequent. He that, from experience of the folly of ambition, resigns his offices, may set himself free at once from temptation to squander his life in Courts, because he cannot regain his former station. He who is enslaved by an amorous passion, may quit his tyrant in disgust, and absence will, without the help of reason, overcome by degrees the desire of returning. But those appetites to which every place affords their proper object, and which require no preparatory measures or gradual advances, are more tenaciously adhesive; the wish is so near the enjoyment, that compliance often precedes consideration; and, before the powers of reason can be summoned, the time for employing them is past.

Indolence is therefore one of the vices from which those whom it once infects are seldom reformed.

Every other species of luxury operates upon some appetite that is quickly satiated, and requires some concurrence of art or accident which every place will not supply ; but the desire of ease acts equally at all hours, and the longer it is indulged is the more increased. To do nothing is in every man's power ; we can never want an opportunity of omitting duties. The lapse to indolence is soft and imperceptible, because it is only a mere cessation of activity ; but the return to diligence is difficult, because it implies a change from rest to motion, from privation to reality.

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Instead of vindicating tragi-comedy by the success of Shakespeare, we ought, perhaps, to pay new honours to that transcendent and unbounded genius that could preside over the passions in sport ; who, to actuate the affections, needed not the slow gradation of common means, but could fill the heart with instantaneous jollity or sorrow, and vary our disposition as he changed his scenes.

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The truth is, that no man is much regarded by the rest of the world. He that considers how little he dwells upon the condition of others, will learn how little the attention of others is attracted by himself. While we see multitudes passing before us, of whom, perhaps, not one appears to deserve our notice, or excite our sympathy, we should remember, that we likewise are lost in the same throng ; that the eye which happens to glance upon

us is turned in a moment on him that follows us ; and that the utmost which we can reasonably hope or fear is, to fill a vacant hour with prattle, and be forgotten.

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It is not often difficult to find a suitable companion, if every man would be content with such as he is qualified to please. But if vanity tempts him to forsake his rank, and post himself among those with whom no common interest or mutual pleasure can ever unite him, he must always live in a state of unsocial separation, without tenderness and without trust.

* * * * *

Among those with whom time and intercourse have made us familiar, we feel our affections divided in different proportions without much regard to moral or intellectual merit. Every man knows some whom he cannot induce himself to trust, though he has no reason to suspect that they would betray him ; those to whom he cannot complain, though he never observed them to want compassion ; those in whose presence he never can be gay, though excited by invitations to mirth and freedom ; and those from whom he cannot be content to receive instruction, though they never insulted his ignorance by contempt or ostentation.

* * * * *

The greater part of mankind find a different reception from different dispositions ; they sometimes obtain unexpected caresses from those whom they never flattered with uncommon regard, and sometimes exhaust all their arts of pleasing without effect. To these it is necessary to look round and

attempt every breast in which they find virtue sufficient for the foundation of friendship ; to enter into the crowd, and try whom chance will offer to their notice, till they fix on some temper congenial to their own, as the magnet rolled in the dust collects the fragments of its kindred metal from a thousand particles of other substances.

* * * * *

He that can contribute to the hilarity of the vacant hour, or partake with equal gust the favourite amusement ; he whose mind is employed on the same objects, and who therefore never harasses the understanding with unaccustomed ideas, will be welcomed with ardour, and left with regret, unless he destroys those recommendations by faults with which peace and security cannot consist.

It were happy, if, in forming friendships, virtue could concur with pleasure ; but the greatest part of human gratifications approach so nearly to vice, that few who make the delight of others their rule of conduct, can avoid disingenuous compliances : yet certainly he that suffers himself to be driven or allured from virtue, mistakes his own interest, since he gains succour by means for which his friend, if ever he becomes wise, must scorn him, and for which at last he must scorn himself.

[160]

She [the lodging-house keeper] had then for six weeks a succession of tenants [of the garret], who left the house on Saturday, and, instead of paying their rent, stormed at their landlady. At last she took in two sisters, one of whom had spent her little fortune in procuring remedies for a lingering disease, and was now supported and attended by the other :

she climbed with difficulty to the apartment, where she languished eight weeks without impatience, or lamentation, except for the expence and fatigue which her sister suffered, and then calmly and contentedly expired. The sister followed her to the grave, paid the few debts which they had contracted, wiped away the tears of useless sorrow, and, returning to the business of common life, resigned to me the vacant habitation.

[161]

The faults of a man loved or honoured sometimes steal secretly and imperceptibly upon the wise and virtuous, but, by injudicious fondness or thoughtless vanity, are adopted with design. There is scarce any failing of mind or body, any error of opinion, or depravity of practice, which, instead of producing shame and discontent, its natural effects, has not at one time or other gladdened vanity with the hopes of praise, and been displayed with ostentatious industry by those who sought kindred minds among the wits or heroes, and could prove their relation only by similitude of deformity.

[164]

One of the most pernicious effects of haste is obscurity. He that teems with a quick succession of ideas, and perceives how one sentiment produces another, easily believes that he can clearly express what he so strongly comprehends; he seldom suspects his thoughts of embarrassment while he preserves in his own memory the series of connection, or his diction of ambiguity while only one sense is present to his mind. Yet if he has been employed

on an abstruse or complicated argument, he will find, when he has a while withdrawn his mind, and returns as a new reader to his work, that he has only a conjectural glimpse of his own meaning, and that to explain it to those whom he desires to instruct, he must open his sentiments, disentangle his method, and alter his arrangement. [169]

To avoid this dangerous imputation [of pedantry] scholars sometimes divest themselves with too much haste of their academical formality, and, in their endeavours to accommodate their notions and their style to common conceptions, talk rather of any thing than of that which they understand, and sink into insipidity of sentiment and meanness of expression.

There prevails among men of letters an opinion, that all appearance of science is particularly hateful to women ; and that therefore, whoever desires to be well received in female assemblies, must qualify himself by a total rejection of all that is serious, rational, or important ; must consider argument or criticism as perpetually interdicted ; and devote all his attention to trifles, and all his eloquence to compliment.

Students often form their notions of the present generation from the writings of the past, and are not very early informed of those changes which the gradual diffusion of knowledge, or the sudden caprice of fashion, produces in the world. Whatever might be the state of female literature in the last century, there is now no longer any danger lest the scholar should want an adequate audience at the tea-table ; and whoever thinks it necessary to regulate his conversation by antiquated rules, will be rather despised for his futility than caressed for his politeness.

To talk intentionally in a manner above the comprehension of those whom we address, is unquestionable pedantry; but surely complaisance requires, that no man should, without proof, conclude his company incapable of following him to the highest elevation of his fancy, or to the utmost extent of his knowledge. It is always safer to err in favour of others than of ourselves, and therefore we seldom hazard much by endeavouring to excel. . . .

There is no kind of impertinence more justly censurable, than his who is always labouring to level thoughts to intellects higher than his own; who apologizes for every word which his own narrowness of converse inclines him to think unusual; keeps the exuberance of his faculties under visible restraint; is solicitous to anticipate inquiries by needless explanations: and endeavours to shade his own abilities, lest weak eyes should be dazzled with their lustre. [173]

Happiness may be destroyed not only by union with the man who is apparently the slave of interest, but with him whom a wild opinion of the dignity of perseverance, in whatever cause, disposes to pursue every injury with unwearied and perpetual resentment; with him whose vanity inclines him to consider every man as a rival in every pretension; with him whose airy negligence puts his friend's affairs or secrets in continual hazard, and who thinks his forgetfulness of others excused by his inattention to himself; and with him whose inconstancy ranges without any settled rule of choice through varieties of friendship, and who adopts and dismisses favourites by the sudden impulse of caprice. [175]

In criticism, as in every other art, we fail sometimes by our weakness, but more frequently by our fault. We are sometimes bewildered by ignorance, and sometimes by prejudice; but we seldom deviate far from the right but when we deliver ourselves up to the direction of vanity.

[176]

[LETTER FROM AN IMAGINARY CORRESPONDENT]

I hasted to London and entreated one of my academical acquaintances, to introduce me into some of the little societies of literature which are formed in taverns and coffee-houses. He was pleased with an opportunity of showing me to his friends, and soon obtained me admission among a select company of curious men, who met once a week to exhilarate their studies and compare their acquisitions.

The eldest and most venerable of this society was Hirsutus, who, after the first civilities of my reception, found means to introduce the mention of his favourite studies, by a severe censure of those who want the due regard for their native country. He informed me that he had early withdrawn his attention from foreign trifles, and that, since he began to addict his mind to serious and manly studies, he had very carefully amassed all the English books that were printed in the black character. This search he had pursued so diligently, that he was able to show the deficiencies of the best catalogues. He had long since completed his Caxton, had three sheets of Treveris¹ unknown to the antiquaries, and wanted to a perfect Pynson² but two volumes, of which one was

¹ Printer in Southwark (fl. 1525).

² Printer in London at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

promised him as a legacy by its present possessor, and the other he was resolved to buy, at whatever price, when Quisquilius's library should be sold. Hirsutus had no other reason for the valuing or slighting a book, than that it was printed in the Roman or the Gothick letter, nor any ideas but such as his favourite volumes had supplied; when he was serious, he expatiated on the narratives of John de Trevisa¹, and, when he was merry, regaled us with a quotation from the *Shippe of Foles*².

While I was listening to this hoary student, Fer-ratus entered in a hurry, and informed us with the abruptness of ecstasy, that his set of halfpence was now complete; he had just received in a handful of change the piece that he had so long been seeking, and could now defy mankind to outgo his collection of English copper.

Chartophylax then observed how fatally human sagacity was sometimes baffled, and how often the most valuable discoveries are made by chance. He had employed himself and his emissaries seven years at great expence to perfect his series of *Gazettes*, but had long wanted a single paper, which, when he despaired of obtaining it, was sent him wrapped round a parcel of tobacco.

Cantilenus turned all his thoughts upon old ballads, for he considered them as the genuine records of the national taste. He offered to show me a copy of *The Children in the Wood*, which he firmly believed to be of the first edition, and by the help of which the text might be freed from several corruptions, if this age of barbarism had any claim to such favours from him.

¹ [1326-1412] Translator, amongst other works, of Higden's *Polychronicon*.

² Alexander Barclay [1475 (about)-1552].

Many were admitted into this society as inferior members, because they had collected old prints and neglected pamphlets, or possessed some fragment of antiquity, as the seal of an ancient corporation, the charter of a religious house, the genealogy of a family extinct, or a letter written in the reign of Elizabeth.

[NOTE by the Editor of the *Rambler*.]

It is natural to feel grief or indignation, when anything necessary or useful is wantonly wasted, or negligently destroyed ; and therefore my correspondent cannot be blamed for looking with uneasiness on the waste of life. Leisure and curiosity might soon make great advances in useful knowledge, were they not diverted by minute emulation and laborious trifles. It may, however, somewhat mollify his anger to reflect, that perhaps none of the assembly which he describes was capable of any nobler employment, and that he who does his best, however little, is always to be distinguished from him who does nothing. Whatever busies the mind without corrupting it, has at least this use, that it rescues the day from idleness, and he that is never idle will not often be vicious.

[177]

It will appear, on a close inspection, that scarce any man becomes eminently disagreeable, but by a departure from his real character, and an attempt at something for which nature or education have left him unqualified.

[179]

I am inclined to believe, that the great law of mutual benevolence is oftener violated by envy than

by interest; and that most of the misery which the defamation of blameless actions, or the obstruction of honest endeavours, brings upon the world, is inflicted by men that propose no advantage to themselves but the satisfaction of poisoning the banquet which they cannot taste, and blasting the harvest which they have no right to reap. . . .

Interest requires some qualities not universally bestowed. The ruin of another will produce no profit to him who has not discernment to mark his advantage, courage to seize, and activity to pursue it; but the cold malignity of envy may be exerted in a torpid and quiescent state, amidst the gloom of stupidity, in the coverts of cowardice. . . .

Interest is seldom pursued but at some hazard. He that hopes to gain much, has commonly something to lose, and, when he ventures to attack superiority, if he fails to conquer, is irrecoverably crushed. But envy may act without expence or danger. To spread suspicion, to invent calumnies, to propagate scandal, requires neither labour nor courage. It is easy for the author of a lie, however malignant, to escape detection, and infamy needs very little industry to assist its circulation. . . .

[Envy] is above all other vices inconsistent with the character of a social being, because it sacrifices truth and kindness to very weak temptations. He that plunders a wealthy neighbour gains as much as he takes away, and may improve his own condition in the same proportion as he impairs another's; but he that blasts a flourishing reputation must be content with a small dividend of additional fame, so small as can afford very little consolation to balance the guilt by which it is obtained.

I have hitherto avoided that dangerous and empirical morality, which cures one vice by means of another.

But envy is so base and detestable, so vile in its original, and so pernicious in its effects, that the predominance of almost any other quality is to be preferred. It is one of those lawless enemies of society, against which poisoned arrows may honestly be used. Let it therefore be constantly remembered, that whoever envies another confesses his superiority, and let those be reformed by their pride who have lost their virtue.

[183]

Let him that peruses this paper review the series of his life, and inquire how he was placed in his present condition. He will find that, of the good or ill which he has experienced, a great part came unexpected, without any visible gradations of approach; that every event has been influenced by causes acting without his intervention; and that, whenever he pretended to the prerogative of foresight, he was mortified with new conviction of the shortness of his views. . . .

What hope is there that a young man, unacquainted with the arguments on either side, should determine his own destiny otherwise than by chance?

When chance has given him a partner of his bed, whom he prefers to all other women, without any proof of superior desert, chance must again direct him in the education of his children; for, who was ever able to convince himself by arguments, that he had chosen for his son that mode of instruction to which his understanding was best adapted, or by which he would most easily be made wise or virtuous?

Whoever shall inquire by what motives he was determined on these important occasions, will find them

such as his pride will scarcely suffer him to confess ; some sudden ardour of desire, some uncertain glimpse of advantage, some petty competition, some inaccurate conclusion, or some example implicitly reverenced. Such are often the first causes of our resolves ; for it is necessary to act, but impossible to know the consequences of action, or to discuss all the reasons which offer themselves on every part to inquisitiveness and solicitude.

Since life itself is uncertain, nothing which has life for its basis can boast much stability. Yet this is but a small part of our perplexity. We set out on a tempestuous sea in quest of some port, where we expect to find rest, but where we are not sure of admission ; we are not only in danger of sinking in the way, but of being misled by meteors mistaken for stars, of being driven from our course by the changes of the wind, and of losing it by unskilful steerage ; yet it sometimes happens, that cross winds blow us to a safer coast, that meteors draw us aside from whirlpools, and that negligence or error contributes to our escape from mischiefs to which a direct course would have exposed us. Of those that, by precipitate conclusions, involve themselves in calamities without guilt, very few, however they may reproach themselves, can be certain that other measures would have been more successful.

In this state of universal uncertainty, where a thousand dangers hover about us, and none can tell whether the good that he pursues is not evil in disguise, or whether the next step will lead him to safety or destruction, nothing can afford any rational tranquillity, but the conviction that, however we amuse ourselves with unideal sounds, nothing in reality is governed by chance, but that the universe is under the perpetual superintendence of him who

created it ; that our being is in the hands of omnipotent goodness, by whom what appears casual to us, is directed for ends ultimately kind and merciful ; and that nothing can finally hurt him who debars not himself from the divine favour. [184]

[CHRISTMAS EVE, 1751.]

It is easiest to forgive while there is yet little to be forgiven. . . .

A wise man will make haste to forgive, because he knows the true value of time, and will not suffer it to pass away in unnecessary pain. . . .

Whoever considers the weakness both of himself and others, will not long want persuasives to forgiveness. We know not to what degree of malignity any injury is to be imputed ; or how much its guilt, if we were to inspect the mind of him that committed it, would be extenuated by mistake, precipitance, or negligence : we cannot be certain how much more we feel than was intended to be inflicted, or how much we increase the mischief to ourselves by voluntary aggravations. We may charge to design the effects of accident ; we may think the blow violent, only because we have made ourselves delicate and tender ; we are on every side in danger of error and guilt ; which we are certain to avoid only by speedy forgiveness.

From this pacific and harmless temper, thus propitious to others and ourselves, to domestic tranquillity and to social happiness, no man is withheld but by pride, by the fear of being insulted by his adversary, or despised by the world.

It may be laid down as an unfailing and universal axiom, that 'all pride is abject and mean.' It is always an ignorant, lazy, or cowardly acquiescence in a false appearance of excellence, and proceeds not from consciousness of our attainments, but insensibility of our wants.

Nothing can be great which is not right. Nothing which reason condemns can be suitable to the dignity of the human mind. To be driven by external motives from the path which our own heart approves ; to give way to any thing but conviction ; to suffer the opinion of others to rule our choice, or overpower our resolves ; is to submit tamely to the lowest and most ignominious slavery, and to resign the right of directing our own lives.

The utmost excellence at which humanity can arrive is a constant and determinate pursuit of virtue, without regard to present dangers or advantage ; a continual reference of every action to the divine will ; an habitual appeal to everlasting justice ; and an unvaried elevation of the intellectual eye to the reward which perseverance only can obtain. But that pride which many, who presume to boast of generous sentiments, allow to regulate their measures, has nothing nobler in view than the approbation of men ; of beings whose superiority we are under no obligation to acknowledge, and who, when we have courted them with the utmost assiduity, can confer no valuable or permanent reward ; of beings who ignorantly judge of what they do not understand, or partially determine what they never have examined ; and whose sentence is therefore of no weight till it has received the ratification of our own conscience.

He that can descend to bribe suffrages like these, at the price of his innocence ; he that can suffer the delight of such acclamations to withhold his attention

from the commands of the universal Sovereign, has little reason to congratulate himself upon the greatness of his mind: whenever he awakes to seriousness and reflection, he must become despicable in his own eyes, and shrink with shame from the remembrance of his cowardice and folly.

Of him that hopes to be forgiven, it is indispensably required that he forgive. It is therefore superfluous to urge any other motive. On this great duty eternity is suspended; and to him that refuses to practise it, the throne of mercy is inaccessible, and the SAVIOUR of the world has been born in vain. [185]

Many, without being able to attain any general character of excellence, have some single art of entertainment which serves them as a passport through the world. One I have known for fifteen years the darling of a weekly club, because every night, precisely at eleven, he begins his favourite song, and during the vocal performance, by corresponding motions of his hand, chalks out a giant upon the wall. Another has endeared himself to a long succession of acquaintances by sitting among them with his wig reversed; another, by contriving to smut the nose of any stranger who was to be initiated in the club; another, by purring like a cat, and then pretending to be frightened; and another, by yelping like a hound, and calling to the drawers to drive out the dog.

Such are the arts by which cheerfulness is promoted, and sometimes friendship established; arts, which those who despise them should not rigorously blame, except when they are practised at the expence of

innocence ; for it is always necessary to be loved, but not always necessary to be reverenced. [188]

He [a lucky projector who has become rich, ostentatiously displays his new acquisitions, talks about lords and great people and patronizes a former intimate friend] was now so much elevated with his own greatness that he thought some humility necessary to avert the glance of envy ; and therefore told me with an air of soft composure, that I was not to estimate life by external appearance, that all these shining acquisitions had added little to his happiness, that he still remembered with pleasure the days in which he and I were upon the level, and had often, in the moment of reflection, been doubtful, whether he should lose much by changing his condition for mine.

I began now to be afraid lest his pride should, by silence and submission, be emboldened to insults that could not easily be borne, and therefore coolly considered how I should repress it without such bitterness of reproof as I was yet unwilling to use. But he interrupted my meditation, by asking leave to be dressed, and told me, that he had promised to attend some ladies in the Park, and, if I was going the same way, would take me in his chariot. I had no inclination to any other favours, and therefore left him without any intention of seeing him again, unless some misfortune should restore his understanding.

I am, &c.

ASPER.

Though I am not wholly insensible of the provocations which my correspondent has received,

I cannot altogether commend the keenness of his resentment, nor encourage him to persist in his resolution of breaking off all commerce with his old acquaintance. One of the golden precepts of Pythagoras directs, that *a friend should not be hated for little faults*; and surely he, upon whom nothing worse can be charged, than that he mats his stairs, and covers his carpet, and sets out his finery to show before those whom he does not admit to use it, has yet committed nothing that should exclude him from common degrees of kindness. Such improprieties often proceed rather from stupidity than malice. Those who thus shine only to dazzle, are influenced merely by custom and example, and neither examine, nor are qualified to examine, the motives of their own practice, or to state the nice limits between elegance and ostentation. They are often innocent of the pain which their vanity produces, and insult others when they have no worse purpose than to please themselves.

He that too much refines his delicacy will always endanger his quiet. Of those with whom nature and virtue oblige us to converse, some are ignorant of the art of pleasing, and offend when they design to caress; some are negligent, and gratify themselves without regard to the quiet of another; some perhaps are malicious, and feel no greater satisfaction in prosperity than that of raising envy and trampling inferiority. But, whatever be the motive of insult, it is always best to overlook it; for folly scarcely can deserve resentment, and malice is punished by neglect.

[200]

There are few words of which the reader believes himself better to know the import than of *poverty*;

yet, whoever studies either the poets or philosophers, will find such an account of the condition expressed by that term as his experience or observation will not easily discover to be true. Instead of the meanness, distress, complaint, anxiety, and dependence, which have hitherto been combined in his ideas of poverty, he will read of content, innocence, and cheerfulness, of health and safety, tranquillity and freedom ; of pleasures not known but to men unencumbered with possessions ; and of sleep that sheds his balsamick anodynes only on the cottage. Such are the blessings to be obtained by the resignation of riches, that kings might descend from their thrones, and generals retire from a triumph, only to slumber undisturbed in the elysium of poverty.

If these authors do not deceive us, nothing can be more absurd than that perpetual contest for wealth which keeps the world in commotion ; nor any complaints more justly censured than those which proceed from want of the gifts of fortune, which we are taught by the great masters of moral wisdom to consider as golden shackles, by which the wearer is at once disabled and adorned ; as luscious poisons, which may for a time please the palate, but soon betray their malignity by languor and by pain.

It is the great privilege of poverty to be happy unenvied, to be healthful without physick, and secure without a guard ; to obtain from the bounty of nature what the great and wealthy are compelled to procure by the help of artists and attendants, of flatterers and spies.

But it will be found upon a nearer view, that they who extol the happiness of poverty do not mean the same state with those who deplore its miseries. Poets have their imaginations filled with ideas of magnificence ; and being accustomed to contemplate the

downfal of empires, or to contrive forms of lamentations for monarchs in distress, rank all the classes of mankind in a state of poverty, who make no approaches to the dignity of crowns. To be poor, in the epick language, is only not to command the wealth of nations, nor to have fleets and armies in pay.¹

[202]

Great qualities, or uncommon accomplishments, [Gulosulus] did not find necessary; for he had already seen that merit rather enforces respect than attracts fondness; and as he thought no folly greater than that of losing a dinner for any other gratification, he often congratulated himself, that he had none of that disgusting excellence which impresses awe upon greatness, and condemns its possessors to the society of those who are wise or brave, and indigent as themselves.

[206]

All attraction is increased by the approach of the attracting body. We never find ourselves so desirous to finish, as in the latter part of our work, or so impatient of delay, as when we know that delay cannot be long. Thus unseasonable importunity of discontent may be partly imputed to languor and weariness, which must always oppress those more whose toil has

¹ ‘Poverty is a great enemy to human happiness; it certainly destroys liberty, and it makes some virtues impracticable, and others extremely difficult.’—Johnson to Boswell, Dec. 7, 1782. Boswell’s *Life*, vol. iv, p. 157, Birkbeck Hill’s edition. Johnson had twopence-halfpenny in his pocket when he came to London with Garrick.—Boswell’s *Life*, vol. i, p. 101.

been longer continued ; but the greater part usually proceeds from frequent contemplation of that ease which is now considered as within reach, and which, when it has once flattered our hopes, we cannot suffer to be withheld.

In some of the noblest compositions of wit, the conclusion falls below the vigour and spirit of the first books ; and as a genius is not to be degraded by the imputation of human failings, the cause of this declension is commonly sought in the structure of the work, and plausible reasons are given why in the defective part less ornament was necessary, or less could be admitted. But, perhaps, the author would have confessed, that his fancy was tired, and his perseverance broken ; that he knew his design to be unfinished, but that, when he saw the end so near, he could no longer refuse to be at rest.

Against the instillations of this frigid opiate, the heart should be secured by all the considerations which once concurred to kindle the ardour of enterprise. Whatever motive first incited action, has still greater force to stimulate perseverance ; since he that might have lain still at first in blameless obscurity, cannot afterwards desist but with infamy and reproach. He, whom a doubtful promise of distant good, could encourage to set difficulties at defiance, ought not to remit his vigour when he has almost obtained his recompense. To faint or loiter when only the last efforts are required, is to steer the ship through tempests, and abandon it to the winds in sight of land ; it is to break the ground and scatter the seed, and at last to neglect the harvest.

* * * * *

He that is himself weary will soon weary the publick. Let him therefore lay down his employment, whatever it be, who can no longer exert his former

activity or attention; let him not endeavour to struggle with censure, or obstinately infest the stage till a general hiss commands him to depart. [207]

Time which puts an end to all human pleasures and sorrows has likewise concluded the labours of the *Rambler*. Having supported for two years the anxious employment of a periodical writer, and multiplied my essays to upwards of two hundred, I have now determined to desist.

The reasons of this resolution it is of little importance to declare, since justification is unnecessary when no objection is made. I am far from supposing that the cessation of my performances will raise any enquiry, for I have never been much a favourite with the publick, nor can boast that, in the progress of my undertaking, I have been animated by the rewards of the liberal, the caresses of the great, or the praises of the eminent.

But I have no design to gratify pride by submission, or malice by lamentation; nor think it reasonable to complain of neglect from those whose regard I never solicited. If I have not been distinguished by the distributors of literary honours, I have seldom descended to the arts by which favour is obtained. I have seen the meteors of fashion rise and fall, without any attempt to add a moment to their duration.

I have never complied with temporary curiosity, nor enabled my readers to discuss the topic of the day: I have rarely exemplified my assertions by living characters; in my papers no man could look for censures of his enemies or praises of himself; and they only were expected to peruse them, whose

passions left them leisure for abstracted truth, and whom virtue could please by its naked dignity.

* * * * *

The supplications of an author never yet reprieved him a moment from oblivion ; and, though greatness has sometimes sheltered guilt, it can afford no protection to ignorance or dulness. Having hitherto attempted only the propagation of truth, I will not at last violate it by the confession of terrors which I do not feel ; having laboured to maintain the dignity of virtue, I will not now degrade it by the meanness of dedication.

* * * * *

Whatever shall be the final sentence of mankind, I have at least endeavoured to deserve their kindness. I have laboured to refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations. Something, perhaps, I have added to the elegance of its construction, and something to the harmony of its cadence. When common words were less pleasing to the ear, or less distinct in their signification, I have familiarised the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas, but have rarely admitted any word not authorised by former writers ; for I believe that whoever knows the English tongue in its present extent, will be able to express his thoughts without further help from other nations.

* * * * *

The essays professedly serious, if I have been able to execute my own intentions, will be found exactly conformable to the precepts of Christianity, without any accommodation to the licentiousness and levity of the present age. I therefore look back on this part of my work with pleasure, which no praise or

blame of man shall diminish or augment. I shall never envy the honours which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers who have given ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth.

*Αὐτῶν ἐκ μακάρων ἀντάξιος εἴη ἀμοιβή.*¹

Celestial pow'rs! that piety regard,
From you my labours wait their last reward.

[208]

¹ This line is the last of Dionysius Periegetes. The complete quotation would be

* * * ἀλλά μοι ὕμνων
αὐτῶν, &c.

APPENDIX¹

THE VISION OF THEODORE

THE HERMIT OF TENERIFFE

FOUND IN HIS CELL

Son of Perseverance, whoever thou art, whose curiosity has led thee hither, read and be wise. He that now calls upon thee is Theodore, the Hermit of Teneriffe, who in the fifty-seventh year of his retreat left this instruction to mankind, lest his solitary hours should be spent in vain.

I was once what thou art now, a groveller on the earth, and a gazer at the sky; I trafficked and heaped wealth together, I loved and was favoured, I wore the robe of honour and heard the musick of adula-

¹ This little piece, although it does not belong to the *Rambler*, has been added because it is one of the best examples of Johnson's morality. He is said to have liked it better than anything he had written. At first sight it looks like invention, but it is really experience. It originally appeared in Dodsley's *Preceptor*, published in 1748, and described on the title-page as a 'general course of education'. Johnson wrote the preface, at the end of which he says, 'Having thus supplied the young student with knowledge, it remains now that he learns its application; and that thus qualified to act his part, he be at last taught to choose it. For this purpose a section is added upon *human life* and *manners*, in which he is cautioned against the danger of indulging his *passions*, or vitiating his *habits* and depraving his *sentiments*. He is instructed in these points by three fables, two of which were of the highest authority in the ancient *Pagan* world, But at this he is not to rest; for if he expects to be wise and happy, he must diligently study the *SCRIPTURES of GOD*.' The three fables are the *Vision* and translations of the *Choice of Hercules* (in verse) and of the *Picture of Human Life* by Cebes.

tion ; I was ambitious, and rose to greatness ; I was unhappy, and retired. I sought for some time what I at length found here, a place where all real wants might be easily supplied, and where I might not be under the necessity of purchasing the assistance of men by the toleration of their follies. Here I saw fruits and herbs and water ; and here determined to wait the hand of death, which I hope, when at last it comes, will fall lightly upon me.

Forty-eight years had I now passed in forgetfulness of all mortal cares, and without any inclination to wander farther than the necessity of procuring sustenance required ; but as I stood one day beholding the rock that overhangs my cell, I found in myself a desire to climb it ; and when I was on its top, was in the same manner determined to scale the next, till by degrees I conceived a wish to view the summit of the mountain, at the foot of which I had so long resided. This motion of my thoughts I endeavoured to suppress, not because it appeared criminal, but because it was new ; and all change, not evidently for the better, alarms a mind taught by experience to distrust itself. I was often afraid that my heart was deceiving me, that my impatience of confinement rose from some earthly passion, and that my ardour to survey the works of nature was only a hidden longing to mingle once again in the scenes of life. I therefore endeavoured to settle my thoughts into their former state, but found their distraction every day greater. I was always reproaching myself with the want of happiness within my reach, and at last began to question whether it was not laziness rather than caution that restrained me from climbing to the summit of Teneriffe.

I rose therefore before the day, and began my journey up the steep of the mountain ; but I had

not advanced far, old as I was and burthened with provisions, when the day began to shine upon me; the declivities grew more precipitous, and the sand滑 from beneath my feet; at last, fainting with labour, I arrived at a small plain almost inclosed by rocks, and open only to the east. I sat down to rest awhile, in full persuasion that when I had recovered my strength I should proceed on my design; but when once I had tasted ease, I found many reasons against disturbing it. The branches spread a shade over my head, and the gales of spring wafted odours to my bosom.

As I sat thus, forming alternately excuses for delay, and resolutions to go forward, an irresistible heaviness suddenly surprised me; I laid my head upon the bank, and resigned myself to sleep; when methought I heard the sound as of the flight of eagles, and a being of more than human dignity stood before me. While I was deliberating how to address him, he took me by the hand with an air of kindness, and asked me solemnly, but without severity, 'Theodore, whither art thou going?' 'I am climbing, answered I, to the top of the mountain, to enjoy a more extensive prospect of the works of nature.' 'Attend first, said he, to the prospect which this place affords, and what thou dost not understand I will explain. I am one of the benevolent beings who watch over the children of the dust, to preserve them from those evils which will not ultimately terminate in good, and which they do not, by their own faults, bring upon themselves. Look round therefore without fear: observe, contemplate, and be instructed.'

Encouraged by this assurance, I looked and beheld a mountain higher than Teneriffe, to the summit of which the human eye could never reach; when I had tired myself with gazing upon its height, I

turned my eyes towards its foot, which I could easily discover, but was amazed to find it without foundation, and placed inconceivably in emptiness and darkness. Thus I stood terrified and confused ; above were tracks inscrutable, and below was total vacuity. But my protector, with a voice of admonition, cried out, Theodore, be not affrighted, but raise thy eyes again : the Mountain of Existence is before thee, survey it and be wise.

I then looked with more deliberate attention, and observed the bottom of the mountain to be a gentle rise, and overspread with flowers ; the middle to be more steep, embarrassed with crags, and interrupted by precipices, over which hung branches loaded with fruits, and among which were scattered palaces and bowers. The tracts which my eye could reach nearest the top were generally barren ; but there were among the clefts of the rocks a few hardy ever-greens, which though they did not give much pleasure to the sight or smell, yet seemed to cheer the labour and facilitate the steps of those who were clambering among them.

Then beginning to examine more minutely the different parts, I observed at a great distance a multitude of both sexes issuing into view from the bottom of the mountain. Their first actions I could not accurately discern : but, as they every moment approached nearer, I found that they amused themselves with gathering flowers under the superintendence of a modest virgin in a white robe, who seemed not over solicitous to confine them to any settled pace or certain track ; for she knew that the whole ground was smooth and solid, and that they could not easily be hurt or bewildered. When, as it often happened, they plucked a thistle for a flower, Innocence, so was she called, would smile at the mistake. Happy, said I, are they who are under so

gentle a government, and yet are safe. But I had no opportunity to dwell long on the consideration of their felicity; for I found that Innocence continued her attendance but a little way, and seemed to consider only the flowery bottom of the mountain as her proper province. Those whom she abandoned scarcely knew that they were left, before they perceived themselves in the hands of Education, a nymph more severe in her aspect and imperious in her commands, who confined them to certain paths, in their opinion too narrow and too rough. These they were continually solicited to leave, by Appetite, whom Education could never fright away, though she sometimes awed her to such timidity, that the effects of her presence were scarcely perceptible. Some went back to the first part of the mountain, and seemed desirous of continuing busied in plucking flowers, but were no longer guarded by Innocence; and such as Education could not force back, proceeded up the mountain by some miry road, in which they were seldom seen, and scarcely ever regarded.

As Education led her troop up the mountain, nothing was more observable than that she was frequently giving them cautions to beware of Habits; and was calling out to one or another at every step, that a Habit was ensnaring them; that they would be under the dominion of Habit before they perceived their danger; and that those whom Habit should once subdue, had little hope of regaining their liberty.

Of this caution, so frequently repeated, I was very solicitous to know the reason, when my protector directed my regard to a troop of pygmies, which appeared to walk silently before those that were climbing the mountain, and each to smooth the way before her follower. I found that I had missed the

notice of them before, both because they were so minute as not easily to be discerned, and because they grew every moment nearer in their colour to the objects with which they were surrounded. As the followers of Education did not appear to be sensible of the presence of these dangerous associates, or, ridiculing their diminutive size, did not think it possible that human beings should ever be brought into subjection by such feeble enemies, they generally heard her precepts of vigilance with wonder: and, when they thought her eye withdrawn, treated them with contempt. Nor could I myself think her cautions so necessary as her frequent inculcations seemed to suppose, till I observed that each of these petty beings held secretly a chain in her hand, with which she prepared to bind those whom she found within her power. Yet these Habits under the eye of Education went quietly forward, and seemed very little to increase in bulk or strength; for though they were always willing to join with Appetite, yet when Education kept them apart from her, they would very punctually obey command, and make the narrow roads in which they were confined easier and smoother.

It was observable, that their stature was never at a stand, but continually growing or decreasing, yet not always in the same proportions: nor could I forbear to express my admiration, when I saw in how much less time they generally gained than lost bulk. Though they grew slowly in the road of Education, it might however be perceived that they grew; but if they once deviated at the call of Appetite, their stature soon became gigantick; and their strength was such, that Education pointed out to her tribe many that were led in chains by them, whom she could never more rescue from their slavery. She pointed them out, but with little effect; for all her

pupils appeared confident of their own superiority to the strongest Habit, and some seemed in secret to regret that they were hindered from following the triumph of Appetite.

It was the peculiar artifice of Habit not to suffer her power to be felt at first. Those whom she led, she had the address of appearing only to attend, but was continually doubling her chains upon her companions; which were so slender in themselves, and so silently fastened, that while the attention was engaged by other objects, they were not easily perceived. Each link grew tighter as it had been longer worn; and when by continual additions they became so heavy as to be felt; they were very frequently too strong to be broken.

When Education had proceeded in this manner to the part of the mountain where the declivity began to grow craggy, she resigned her charge to two powers of superior aspect. The meaner of them appeared capable of presiding in senates, or governing nations, and yet watched the steps of the other with the most anxious attention, and was visibly confounded and perplexed if ever she suffered her regard to be drawn away. The other seemed to approve her submission as pleasing, but with such a condescension as plainly shewed that she claimed it as due; and indeed so great was her dignity and sweetness, that he who would not reverence, must not behold her.

‘Theodore,’ said my protector, ‘be fearless, and be wise; approach these powers, whose dominion extends to all the remaining part of the Mountain of Existence.’ I trembled, and ventured to address the inferior nymph, whose eyes, though piercing and awful, I was not able to sustain. ‘Bright Power,’ said I, ‘by whatever name it is lawful to address thee, tell me, thou who presidest here, on what

condition thy protection will be granted? It will be granted,' said she, 'only to obedience. I am Reason, of all subordinate beings the noblest and the greatest; who, if thou wilt receive my laws, will reward thee like the rest of my votaries, by conducting thee to Religion.' Charmed by her voice and aspect, I professed my readiness to follow her. She then presented me to her mistress, who looked upon me with tenderness. I bowed before her, and she smiled.

When Education delivered up those for whose happiness she had been so long solicitous, she seemed to expect that they should express some gratitude for her care, or some regret at the loss of that protection which she had hitherto afforded them. But it was easy to discover, by the alacrity which broke out at her departure, that her presence had been long displeasing, and that she had been teaching those who felt in themselves no want of instruction. They all agreed in rejoicing that they should no longer be subject to her caprices, or disturbed by her documents, but should be now under the direction only of Reason, to whom they made no doubt of being able to recommend themselves by a steady adherence to all her precepts. Reason counselled them, at their first entrance upon her province, to inlist themselves among the votaries of Religion; and informed them, that if they trusted to her alone, they would find the same fate with her other admirers, whom she had not been able to secure against Appetites and Passions, and who, having been seized by Habits in the regions of Desire, had been dragged away to the caverns of Despair. Her admonition was vain, the greater number declared against any other direction, and doubted not but by her superintendency they should climb with safety up the Mountain of Existence. 'My power,' said Reason,

‘is to advise, not to compel ; I have already told you the danger of your choice. The path seems now plain and even, but there are asperities and pitfalls, over which Religion only can conduct you. Look upwards, and you perceive a mist before you settled upon the highest visible part of the mountain ; a mist by which my prospect is terminated, and which is pierced only by the eyes of Religion. Beyond it are the temples of Happiness, in which those who climb the precipice by her direction, after the toil of their pilgrimage, repose for ever. I know not the way, and therefore can only conduct you to a better guide. Pride has sometimes reproached me with the narrowness of my view, but, when she endeavoured to extend it, could only shew me, below the mist, the bowers of Content ; even they vanished as I fixed my eyes upon them ; and those whom she persuaded to travel towards them were inchained by Habits, and ingulfed by Despair, a cruel tyrant, whose caverns are beyond the darkness on the right side and on the left, from whose prisons none can escape, and whom I cannot teach you to avoid.’

Such was the declaration of Reason to those who demanded her protection. Some that recollect the dictates of Education, finding them now seconded by another authority, submitted with reluctance to the strict decree, and engaged themselves among the followers of Religion, who were distinguished by the uniformity of their march, though many of them were women, and by their continual endeavours to move upwards, without appearing to regard the prospects which at every step courted their attention.

All those who determined to follow either Reason or Religion, were continually importuned to forsake the road, sometimes by Passions and sometimes by Appetites, of whom both had reason to boast the

success of their artifices; for so many were drawn into by-paths, that any way was more populous than the right. The attacks of the Appetites¹ were more impetuous, those of the Passions longer continued. The Appetites turned their followers directly from the true way, but the Passions marched at first in a path nearly in the same direction with that of Reason and Religion; but deviated by slow degrees, till at last they entirely changed their course. Appetite drew aside the dull, and Passion the sprightly. Of the Appetites, Lust was the strongest; and of the Passions, Vanity. The most powerful assault was to be feared, when a Passion and an Appetite joined their enticements; and the path of Reason was best followed, when a Passion called to one side, and an Appetite to the other.

These seducers had the greatest success upon the followers of Reason, over whom they scarcely ever failed to prevail, except when they counteracted one another. They had not the same triumphs over the votaries of Religion; for though they were often led aside for a time, Religion commonly recalled them by her emissary Conscience, before Habit had time to enchain them. But they that professed to obey Reason, if once they forsook her seldom returned; for she had no messenger to summon them but Pride, who generally betrayed her confidence, and employed all her skill to support Passion; and if ever she did her duty, was found unable to prevail, if Habit had interposed.

I soon found that the great danger to the followers of Religion was only from Habit; every other power

¹ *Appetite*—The natural desire of good; the instinct by which we are led to seek pleasure. The desire of sensual pleasure.

Passion—Any effect caused by external agency. Violent commotion of the mind. Anger, zeal, ardour, love, eagerness. *Johnson's Dictionary*. Edit. 1755.

was easily resisted, nor did they find any difficulty when they inadvertently quitted her, to find her again by the direction of Conscience, unless they had given time to Habit to draw her chain behind them, and bar up the way by which they had wandered. Of some of those, the condition was justly to be pitied, who turned at every call of Conscience, and tried, but without effect, to burst the chains of Habit: saw Religion walking forward at a distance, saw her with reverence, and longed to join her; but were, whenever they approached her, withheld by Habit, and languished in sordid bondage, which they could not escape, though they scorned and hated it.

It was evident that the Habits were so far from growing weaker by these repeated contests, that if they were not totally overcome, every struggle enlarged their bulk and increased their strength; and a Habit opposed and victorious was more than twice as strong as before the contest. The manner in which those who were weary of their tyranny endeavoured to escape from them, appeared by the event to be generally wrong; they tried to loose their chains one by one, and to retreat by the same degrees as they advanced; but before the deliverance was completed, Habit always threw new chains upon her fugitive; nor did any escape her but those who, by an effort sudden and violent, burst their shackles at once, and left her at a distance; and even of these, many, rushing too precipitately forward, and hindered by their terrors from stopping where they were safe, were fatigued with their own vehemence, and resigned themselves again to that power from whom an escape must be so dearly bought, and whose tyranny was little felt, except when it was resisted.

Some however there always were, who when they found Habit prevailing over them, called upon Reason

or Religion for assistance ; each of them willingly came to the succour of her suppliant, but neither with the same strength, nor the same success. Habit, insolent with her power, would often presume to parley with Reason, and offer to loose some of her chains if the rest might remain. To this Reason, who was never certain of victory, frequently consented, but always found her concession destructive, and saw the captive led away by Habit to his former slavery. Religion never submitted to treaty, but held out her hand with certainty of conquest ; and if the captive to whom she gave it did not quit his hold, always led him away in triumph, and placed him in the direct path to the temple of Happiness, where Reason never failed to congratulate his deliverance, and encourage his adherence to that power to whose timely succour he was indebted for it.

When the traveller was again placed in the road of Happiness, I saw Habit again gliding before him, but reduced to the stature of a dwarf, without strength and without activity ; but when the Passions or Appetites, which had before seduced him, made their approach, Habit would on a sudden start into size, and with unexpected violence push him towards them. The wretch, thus impelled on one side, and allured on the other, too frequently quitted the road of Happiness, to which, after his second deviation from it, he rarely returned : but, by a timely call upon Religion, the force of Habit was eluded, her attacks grew fainter, and at last her correspondence with the enemy was intirely destroyed. She then began to employ those restless faculties in compliance with the power which she could not overcome ; and as she grew again in stature and in strength, cleared away the asperities of the road to Happiness.

From this road I could not easily withdraw my

attention, because all who travelled it appeared cheerful and satisfied ; and the farther they proceeded, the greater appeared their alacrity, and the stronger their conviction of the wisdom of their guide. Some, who had never deviated but by short excursions, had Habit in the middle of their passage vigorously supporting them, and driving off their Appetites and Passions which attempted to interrupt their progress. Others, who had entered this road late, or had long forsaken it, were toiling on without her help at least, and commonly against her endeavours. But I observed, when they approached to the barren top, that few were able to proceed without some support from Habit ; and that they, whose Habits were strong, advanced towards the mists with little emotion, and entered them at last with calmness and confidence ; after which, they were seen only by the eye of Religion ; and though Reason looked after them with the most earnest curiosity, she could only obtain a faint glimpse, when her mistress, to enlarge her prospect, raised her from the ground. Reason, however, discerned that they were safe, but Religion saw that they were happy.

‘Now, Theodore,’ said my protector, ‘withdraw thy view from the regions of obscurity, and see the fate of those who, when they were dismissed by Education, would admit no direction but that of Reason. Survey their wanderings, and be wise.’

I looked then upon the road of Reason, which was indeed, so far as it reached, the same with that of Religion, nor had Reason discovered it but by her instruction. Yet when she had once been taught it, she clearly saw that it was right ; and Pride had sometimes incited her to declare that she discovered it herself, and persuaded her to offer herself as a guide to Religion ; whom after many vain experiments she

found it her highest privilege to follow. Reason was however at last well instructed in part of the way, and appeared to teach it with some success, when her precepts were not misrepresented by Passion, or her influence overborne by Appetite. But neither of these enemies was she able to resist. When Passion seized upon her votaries, she seldom attempted opposition: she seemed indeed to contend with more vigour against Appetite, but was generally overwearied in the contest: and if either of her opponents had confederated with Habit, her authority was wholly at an end. When Habit endeavoured to captivate the votaries of Religion, she grew by slow degrees, and gave time to escape; but in seizing the unhappy followers of Reason, she proceeded as one that had nothing to fear, and enlarged her size, and doubled her chains without intermission, and without reserve.

Of those who forsook the directions of Reason, some were led aside by the whispers of Ambition, who was perpetually pointing to stately palaces, situated on eminences on either side, recounting the delights of affluence, and boasting the security of power. They were easily persuaded to follow her, and Habit quickly threw her chains upon them; they were soon convinced of the folly of their choice, but few of them attempted to return. Ambition led them forward from precipice to precipice, where many fell and were seen no more. Those that escaped were, after a long series of hazards, generally delivered over to Avarice, and enlisted by her in the service of Tyranny, where they continued to heap up gold till their patrons or their heirs pushed them headlong at last into the caverns of Despair.

Others were inticed by Intemperance to ramble in search of those fruits that hung over the rocks,

and filled the air with their fragrance. I observed, that the Habits which hovered about these soon grew to an enormous size, nor were there any who less attempted to return to Reason, or sooner sunk into the gulfs that lay before them. When these first quitted the road, Reason looked after them with a frown of contempt, but had little expectations of being able to reclaim them; for the bowl of intoxication was of such qualities as to make them lose all regard but for the present moment; neither Hope nor Fear could enter their retreats; and Habit had so absolute a power, that even Conscience, if Religion had employed her in their favour, would not have been able to force an entrance.

There were others whose crime it was rather to neglect Reason than to disobey her; and who retreated from the heat and tumult of the way, not to the bowers of Intemperance, but to the maze of Indolence. They had this peculiarity in their condition, that they were always in sight of the road of Reason, always wishing for her presence, and always resolving to return to-morrow. In these was most eminently conspicuous the subtlety of Habit, who hung imperceptible shackles upon them, and was every moment leading them farther from the road, which they always imagined that they had the power of reaching. They wandered on from one double of the labyrinth to another with the chains of Habit hanging secretly upon them, till, as they advanced, the flowers grew paler, and the scents fainter; they proceeded in their dreary march without pleasure in their progress, yet without power to return; and had this aggravation above all others, that they were criminal but not delighted. The drunkard for a time laughed over his wine; the ambitious man triumphed in the miscarriage of his rival; but the

captives of Indolence had neither superiority nor merriment. Discontent lowered in their looks, and Sadness hovered round their shades ; yet they crawled on reluctant and gloomy, till they arrived at the depths of the recess, varied only with poppies and nightshade, where the dominion of Indolence terminates, and the hopeless wanderer is delivered up to Melancholy ; the chains of Habit are riveted for ever ; and Melancholy, having tortured her prisoner for a time, consigns him at last to the cruelty of Despair.

While I was musing on this miserable scene, my protector called out to me, 'Remember, Theodore, and be wise, and let not Habit prevail against thee.' I started, and beheld myself surrounded by the rocks of Teneriffe ; the birds of light were singing in the trees, and the glances of the morning darted upon me.

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